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EARLIER POEMS

REGINALD C. ROBBINS



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EARLIER POEMS

I

POEMS OF APPRECIATION

ON CERTAIN GOSPEL PAINTINGS

THE story of an alien race ; minute,
Painstaking portraiture of Syrian, Jew,
Greek, Arab, Roman : if a tragedy,
Yet strange ; if an apotheosis, still
Too fleshly (ay, too blood-stain'd) to believe ! —
Has it become but this ? That saviorship
Saved, then, the world a scant two thousand years ;
Not now nor yet tomorrow ? Yesterday
Was Christ Christ ; and today but Joseph's son ?
Just people painted : these are thieves ; and he
A malefactor ! Nay, no paradise
Nor thin transfiguration spoils the spell
Of sweat and dust ; of some mere agony
Of wasted passion, of a thwarted soul
At best but disillusion'd. And the poor,
Deluded, disappointed Semite folk
Turn back to toil with heavy heart, take up
Alone and wholly comfortless the grim,
Interminable burden. That is all ;
Just people painted : an intense, sweet life

EARLIER POEMS

Crush'd out and ended ; and a discontent
Where had been undemurring drudgery.

Just people painted. — Slightly from the shore
A boat becalm'd, with silent fisher-folk
Silently fishing ; and an azure sky
Quiet above the boat, and underneath,
A quiet, azure water ; and about,
A pasture-land ; and, lo ! a little town
At peace and undemurring : all is quite
In the world as though there had not been a son
To Joseph nor to Mary. And, behold !
There stands upon the shore alone, unseen,
Mary's and Joseph's son. And all the world
(He sees and knows) is as if he, a man,
Had never been : his agony, his life
So tragic-true, saving men yesterday ;
Not now, nor yet tomorrow ! And in that
Unspoken and unspeakable despair
He calls or seems to call ; is seen or seems
So to be seen quiet upon the shore
With earnest beckoning. And they becalm'd

ON CERTAIN GOSPEL PAINTINGS

Start up from fishing ; for they seem to see.

It is the story of an alien race ;
A folk whose human tragedy endured
To save men's souls a scant two thousand years ;
Not now, nor yet tomorrow. Shall the world
Be as though yesterday had never been ?

AN “AUTOUR DU BERCEAU”

WERE it not for the angel in the place,
The place were so forlorn : a chamber, cold,
Low, rough and scantily cumber'd ; here a stool,
Yonder the settle, and in homeliest sort
The mother's mattress, cradle for the babe :
Beyond these, nothing. Only, of the bed
A woman, worn and weak almost to death ;
Of the crib a weanling scarce with strength of life
Yet, but with potency to wax and grow
Big to the father's frame he has not seen
Nor e'er may know save she shall, point by point,
Mould the babe to be manly as was once
Her man and guardian of the house. But she
Can nothing of herself ; can scarcely live
A little ; much less, lend of life. And, were
These all that fill'd the place, ay, how forlorn !

Yet, to the nature of the need, is come
An angel in the house. An utmost need —
And he is there, busied about the babe

AN "AUTOUR DU BERCEAU"

Beseemingly. She is too sick to say :

"Sir, spare us ; render your benignity

Where is more worth." Nor had she dream'd to urge

Of heaven such aid august. She lies there now

By very reason of her need of help

Quietly, awfully accepting so

The ministry ; one hand by force of love,

Even despite the fever, raised (the least)

In mother-motion toward the babe. And he,

The babe, too young to question whence the care

If supernature's, or the world's right way,

Croons, as 't would seem, with somewhat which can
touch

Sick ears to sympathy. And so she lies

Her lids just lifted to that light between

The white wings.—

It were so forlorn a place

Were not the angel there. But need is hers

And love — and he is there ; and shall be there

In the house of love. For such were ne'er forlorn.

A “DEAD MONK”

SO, he has triumph'd. This is his reward.
Thus shall the triumph ever be. And thus
Be the reward. — Mark the grim jaws that lock'd
To bar world's bread out. Lo! the inward lids
And beetling fore-brow, hard-drawn, glooming down
To screen sight from earth's seeming — all with aim
To cheat earth at the last and leave with her
Nothing of manhood. Ay, for nothing earth's
Nor man's remain'd to die out of this corpse.
This is earth's, man's revenge ; that here remains
Nought worth commemoration. Could a sense
Screen'd from earth's seeming pierce these shows of
things
To earth-hood and be manhood that remains
A memorable presence ? Could he be
Immortal, all whose life expected death ?

A MADONNA OF DEL SARTO

'But still the other's Virgin was his wife'

NAY, there is nought more holy in the world
Than this her motherhood : no mystery,
Miraculous dispensation ; none the less
Divine in wrapt acceptance of the truth.
Hers, no mere ignorance of woes to come,
Nor yet reluctance ; but a soft acclaim
For boundless possibility to be
Sponsor to man's extremest sacrifice :
For any sacrifice in absolute peace
(With scarce appeal for recompense to God !)
Her mother's soul may earn of her man-child.
She would not so deny divinity
As to forswear man-child for born of man.
She would not need a heaven, who, at the cross
As now, would wear still the same sober grace
For wisdom that our worldhood is divine.—
Here is it shown me, this so holy thing
Of motherhood. Here will I sit and seek
To fathom it ; and learn thee, O Andrea !

EARLIER POEMS

She was thy wife, we know. Yet much of this
Thou gavest. Seem'd she like this, then, to thee ?

Think ! a man's wife may be madonna too,
Both truths in one love ! — Raphael had none
Such intimate insight ; for he had no wife,
Could paint Madonna only. Titian, haply,
Achieved too loftily to learn a truth
So humbly holy. Michelangelo
Knew thousand shapes of mightiness ; his strength
Was desperate, glorious more than motherly.
Rubens ? There 's scarce one pose of all but smacks
Of some vulgarity. Murillo fain
Had painted this thou paintedst, O Andrea !
The rest are round about thee. Thou hast found
Even in thy forthright, plain presentment homely
Of this thou knowest, nimbus'd by thy great,
Kind, twilight, pitying soul with immanence
Of adumbration : thou hast spoken the love
Without sin and the spirit incarnated
Nor Titian, Raphael, nay, Angelico
Had more than symbolized. — Did they believe

A MADONNA OF DEL SARTO

Theirs were no symbols ? Ah ! but now the signs
Have need of explanation ; so are false.
What now the Virgin-Birth ? What angel came
To Mary yearning ? Who might mean he saw
Aught womanly ascend into the clouds ?
And what their import were these facts approved ?
But one truth speaks which these mere signs would
show ;
One Mother-of-God there is, each newest hour
A woman realizes (not with fear —
With glad assumption of the privilege !)
That hers is for another infinite life
To offer infinite life ; and be divine
In being motherly. This, O Andrea,
Is thine : thy wife ; so, thy madonna too !

APOTHEOSIS

A LEGEND OF THE PAINTING BUDDHA

“ MAJESTY ! — by your pardon ! — courtiers all,
My critics ! much is it of grief to me
Through your dissatisfaction ; yet not anger,
Envy nor malice in me that I learn
Your loftier lights than mine ; but loneliness
Where least I seem’d alone. This scene which suits
You, Majesty, and you, critics, so ill ;
This forest-park, this foliaged tracery
Of twining boughs and moss and cool-sluiced brooks,
This green and garden’d sanctuary ; made I
Of paint from pallet that therein I might
As in an own particular paradise
Delight, with you, through you ; and that therein
My spirit, god-like, leaving at its death
This patient tenement, in such abode,
Yea, in this very painted plash and plume
Of cold brook and of whispering pine, should bide
Eternally as in Nirvana. These
I made ; who feel a soul-sufficiency

APOTHEOSIS

Even in this scene which suits you, sirs, so ill —
Mine own particular paradise ! I grieve
But that alone, untenanted of you
These groves receive me so in singleness ;
Me dead to man's less-world I fain had loved :
A God ! — By pardon, Majesty, I take
Farewell now ; enter into and enjoy
Nirvana ; feel this art-world I have made,
Truth of mine everlasting being. Man,
Forever fare thee well ! ”

He turn'd and stepp'd
Into that painted world of leaves and boughs
His heart and hand had made ; turn'd, enter'd in
And disappear'd 'mid those hush'd, whispering stems.
Then did that whole wood-world his soul had made
Vanish aloft in a live light, all hues
Melted and intermingled unto White.

But one saith musingly : “ What god is he ?
No god ! The god-like had still wrought and staid ! ”

A MEMORIAL

HERE in the chancel-stillness let us sit
And dream together of the dead. For thou
Lovedst the dead with fitly equal love.
And here are none to move with murmur'd prayer;
Nor mighty, overpowering music pour'd
To bear the dream adown: but quiet now,
Silence and splendor of the shining shrine.

See how the Christ in simplest dignity,
Tender and strong and gravely radiant sits
With hand half-lifted, teaching. See how kneels
Restful, upheld with sweet self-poise of faith,
Buoy'd about as by fervor of full proof,
And eyes one reverence of high belief,
Mary. And light between, above, beyond
And wide about in beams of rich sunshine
Through the grape-arbor falling fills the porch,
Temple and colonnade, fills the far hills
Purpled and all yon summer-shimmering city
With steadfastness of saintly aureole stream'd

A MEMORIAL

Through and through : atmosphere of peace and truth.
Feel how the pure forms fill the world with wonder
More than a summer's sun. Feel how the day
Floods face and figure of them mutely there
With meaning more than mere memorial.

Dream on the peaceful scene of serious faith
Steadfast and luminous and lovely, flooding
The world with beauty of religion. Dream
Real the loved presence of the steadfast dead

SUFFERANCE

AND one, tumultuous, wail'd through bursting tears :
“ Lord, is this she ? ” And one made stifled moan
With hot, dry agony of desperate gaze.
And one beside the bed, impetuous, dropp'd
Floor-flung with sweat and passion-prayer of soul
Rigidly, terribly beseeching ; each,
Each heart a desolation newly-made,
Grief lone, full to the fashion of each strength.

But one, and he the eldest, deepest bow'd
By his world's weight — half-broken yet though
brave —
In whose heart burden of the loss to bear
Were anguish'd most ; he whom his gentlest frame
Seem'd least fit to sustain in grief's first fall ;
He but stoop'd low and kiss'd her where she lay
Newly dead ; mildly laid upon her lips
Love's benediction, faith's finality : —
“ Yea, this is she. There can come no grief now,
No loss.” Then he stood quiet in the midst
As death ; fearing not life nor anything.

“ MARIAE NASCENTI ”

HOW but the stone aspires ! See huge and high,
What lift to the great groins ; how tiptoe stand
Pillar and pinnacle and minaret
Intent on heaven-attaining : stalwart still,
Buttress'd and bearing well the weight of a world
Which broods on Milan ! And above these far,
Ay, beyond Milan as an ice-robed Alp,
Even above best reach of saint on saint
However pedestall'd, the golden maid,
Of God the Mother, dominant of all !

It is a work of ages when the world
Was very sure of aspiration ; when
Men slaughter'd, tortured, buttressing a faith
Which tower'd serene beyond mere mundane ways
Of firm foundation ; when the power of earth,
The stony-heartedness of things, seem'd but
The more assurance of a love vouchsafed
Beyond earth-intimation. Then the stone —
Stone still and needing to be buttress'd well,

EARLIER POEMS

Toil'd-in for centuries; ay, fretted, chased
With ingenuity of much disguise —
Leap'd yet a wan, white flame : its smoke, the clouds
Even of God's footstool ; and its flower and birth
The Mother-Maiden, pinnacled of all.

Now are we not so sure. Our warranty
Absolves not slaughter. Though we work ; and some
Have solace, learning of a faith that builds
No altars ; nay, nor longer needs to build.
Our faith is not a stone, nor our new Christ
Born of an idol eminent o'er all.
Yet are there hours when we would fain be sure,
Have stones that we might buttress ; but to be
Certain of aspiration ; not as now
Mute for the fear we would not speak aright.
Yea, is this temple for a mummery ?
Are stones, that leap and lift with yearning, tombs
Of a dead passion and a soul that was ?
Is there no faith which Milan may today
Feel vaulted, groin'd and pinnacled ; no Love
High over Milan ? —

“MARIAE NASCENTI”

In this vast, dim place
A woman crouch'd ; ah, with an usual need
Of intercession ; at the least, a want
Of heart-salvation ! And within her soul
(Her intimate estimate of many things
Their mutual ministry each truth to each),
Even through the mockery of those stone lips
Of hers, which mean not : may not meaning be
Of pillar, groin and lifted vault, of saint
And saint on pinnacle all buttress'd well
And chased with labor of old years of hope
When strength abounded — hero, sage and saint,
Angels and then the stars : and, in the midst,
With world-inviting arms compassionate
The Christ-Child Mother : Minister of all ?

KARNAK

THIS, then, is Karnak. From without her walls
Come sounds of man and beast; but from within,
None. If beyond her gateways there be green
Groves and the silver of wide streams, within
Are none. But stones are here yet, huge and stark
And silent in their ruin; only stones.

What homely noise ascends into the air
From earth around : the croon of doves, and chant
Of sudden cockrels ; all the dooryard sounds
Of humble husbandry ! And thence the cry
Of children, naked as the dust, at sport.
Thence, too, the lilt and strange, wailing refrain
Of boys who bear in baskets the dark loam
(And they can dig but sphinxes to the light!)
Fresh from a bank-side. Or above these all
An ass, his sufferance failing, speaks at last
That agony of utterance of his.
Such are the sounds ; with overhead the scream
Of vulture, owl or hawk who find delight,

KARNAK

Refuge and home in ruin. But within
Is silence like eternity ; and stone.—
Ay, and about this mighty death-mask lies
Yon lustrous circlet of the youngest green
That grows by gift of Nile. And, on beyond
The circuit of where once was Thebes, uprear
Cliffs that are catacombs of kings; whereby
One sees a temple to greet Karnak still
Through ruin ; or, mere flecks upon the plain,
Memnon's colossi gazing eastward yet
Though sight was long since reft them, and their dawn
Leaps not that gave them voice. And these are not
Thebes nor eternity, but tombs and stone
Tottering in ruin. Nothing that was built
Lives; only lives the young spring everywhere.—
Though these were builded for eternity,
These stones ; to sun's praise whilst the sun be lord!
Thebes, to be Thebes an if the heavens fall !—

Lo ! the day lingers. These vast arches stretch
Purpling their shadows; and themselves grow gold.
And somewhat of the sky seems strewn among

EARLIER POEMS

Their fallen. And the sun-rays stream a strength
To build up Karnak : and the place is whole.
Yon black-stoled verger seems at sacrifice
With incense — certainly world's parasites
That pester are not here : but only I
With Pharaoh's children and a thousand thoughts
How Egypt still were Egypt — I alone
Weeping in Karnak! For we now who build
Have knowledge how our building, though of stone,
Earns not eternity. And we are come
Since Pharaoh's hour through many a wanton hope
Of other-worlds, back to men's earth at last,
Faithless of any other earth whereon
To build us temples ; seeking only now
To build, if build we must, not out of stone
Nor to eternity — unless today
Fore-hold tomorrow ; save the life of things
Be proven in dying; and our conscience of
Ruin be resurrection. — So we stand
Weeping in Karnak for the faith of kings.

THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS AT THEBES

HERE are world's portals to the underworld.—
For I have been and seen and am come back ;
And, being return'd, must speak of what I saw.

The entrances are downward ; and the ways
Darksome : but still the scenes set by the way
Are like to those of earth if not so fair.
Merely, 'tis night ; the sun, an orb of dusk.
And these are ghost-things merely and not men :
Though looking like them, yet lacking their life.
For earth is pictured merely, not unlike
That Theban river-plain beyond the hills
Where life is teeming : only, not alive.
And at the core this strange-hewn underworld
Is of the desert rocks above it, whence
The corpse was carried to abide below
Eternally beneath them. Nought is here
Unearthly : only, earth is here like death.
Even the perpetuity is just
Earth's desert seeming-perpetuity

EARLIER POEMS

Where change were slow, none less than elsewhere
sure,
And time's eternity less subtly fill'd
With values born of mutability
In conscienced apperceptions among men.

Therefore am I come back, having been and seen
How wholly worthless were an underworld.—
We, who have learn'd how night and day but prove
Sun's single course ; how spirits still are men ;
And conscience, all-time ; need no longer dig
World's exit downward. But have been and seen
And are return'd, each hour ; by every breath.

ABU SIMBEL

THERE is an hill hath open'd out its heart
Unto the sun of each advancing spring
Through many thousand ages of delight
With wonder and with sweetness mightily ;
A temple and an habitation of
The dignity and wonder of all things.

Kings were its acolytes. And at its gates
Colossi, clothed in sweetness as in strength,
With sacred wonder at the world gave guard ;
Declaring, even by beauty more than bulk,
The splendor of that hill's unaltering faith
From everlasting. And the infinite
Succession of the days and nights ; the flush
Of dawn upon that portal ; and the rich,
Mysterious meaning of the moon ; have yielde[n]
Unto those giant wardens something of
A wisdom earn'd of large experience
Regarding earth : of ever-murmuring Nile
And the still orbit of the Nubian hills.

EARLIER POEMS

Stars lent their lustre. And a nightingale
Hath sung (or haply he may so have sung
As now) through every twilight. — That those forms
Have scarce been cognisant how from their midst
One form hath shatter'd groundward ; have not seen
How their sole hill alone, of all those hills
Which seem'd so human, e'er had any heart
To open at the springtime ; nor have felt
How kings have ceased to kindle in that fane
Incense of splendor ; how the sweetness of
Those inner chambers hath given space to dust ;
And only beasts inhabit. Nor have known
How sand like snow lies drifted round that hill
Tawny and savage, swart and desert gray.

THE SCULPTURES OF ABU SIMBEL, WITHIN

NOT for thy victories, nor for this vast,
Vainglorious temple in entirety
(Though that were somewhat, Ramses !) but for this
Innermost chamber, that last sanctuary
Wherein abide the best of Egypt's gods !
What though thy figure undivine must sit
Beside great Thebes', beside great Memphis' God
And Him Who lights the world ? We leave thee this
The last infirmity of kings ; and thank thee
Still for that inner chamber in the rock.

There, all were holy, Ramses ; nay, even thou !
There ; where the bats inhabit and the owl
Finds not enough of starlight ; where no air
From any wandering, desert puff of wind
Disturbs the settling of the sifted dust ;
There, though as in crumbling bands bitumen-swathed,
Nigh lasteth a religion, elsewhere nought ;
A power and a passion and a spirit —

EARLIER POEMS

Ptah and Harmachis, yea, and Amen-Ra —
Which needed but some self-divinity
(Nay, Ramses, no divinity of kings !),
Some insight of our soul-unendingness
(Conclusiveness by all-time sympathy,
Scarce as by an endurance which is not) ;
To move and hold the world unto this hour.
Call thee a man, humble and fain to sit
In dust and darkness, featureless and worn,
Though, even by virtue of appreciant doubt,
Faith-hearted to move heaven to help the world ;
Call thee a Christ : and earth were saved anew !

Men can earn conquests over desert hordes
Now as in thy time, Ramses ; men might boast
Vainglorious, forsooth, almost as thou.
Thy gods, thy pettier godship, were not so
Efficient to restore the world. — And yet
Step from this chamber, Ramses ! Our estate
Hath need of men like thee, at worst, with faith
In worth and warrant ; who, at worst, accept
(Wiselier than thou and humbly thus the more !)

THE SCULPTURES OF ABU SIMBEL, WITHIN

Responsibility through all they do.

Thou hadst no doubts of thine efficiency

To build a holy place unto all time,

God-like to stand accountable at last ! —

Though is earth doubting still beyond this rock.

And lo ! even now her doubt (that sympathy,

That soul, of best belief !) is visiting

What else were sepulchre ! The springing sun

Casts one clear shaft past archway, pillar, hall ;

And penetrates thy tomb and turns this stone

To triumph. Shall the momentary beam

Provoke no stirring of these senseless things

That thou hast wrought thee ? Shalt thou let the
world

Learn thee too late, learn thee but to bemoan

The inestimable error thou hast made ?

Shall sun disclose his children wholly dead ;

To leave thee lost ; for lands that knew thee not ? —

Wake, Ramses ! Let there be one man of faith !

KERRERI

ABOVE, a pitiless burning ; and below,
The burnt earth ; here and there a mockery,
Some dream of the desert that the blue above
Were fallen and found unscorching : but the truth
Is bitter ; and the stones are blistering.—
Yet were it rather that earth's sufferance
Is ended and her agony endured.
Earth is not sleeping now : but — 'only dead'.

Earth had a grisly dream, a gaunt debauch
Of truculent riot in the name of God,
A furious lechery of faith ; and here
Awoke in death-throes. Tens of thousands slain
Witness'd the cataclysm. And the sun
Burnt the bones bare and left them where they lie :—
All in the name of God ; the false report
Of one who cried : “ God cometh to demand
That all men through the mouth of me, His mouth,
Worship with one voice ; through the hand of me
Smite with one sword.” — The unity-of-God

KERRERI

Were not an unity of creed ; the cult
Of faith, not formal. The monotony
Was death, not life. And earth was drench'd in blood.

So serve we somewhat faith by bathing earth
In blood, by lying and by lechery,
Through each the darkness of his loneliness'
Bewilderment begot of love and need.
So, by the failure of the singleness
Of creed, best prove we truth's totality
As we are each and several : 'God', the whole
By virtue but of multiplicity
In heart-belief, each heart unto himself. —
Then the sun comes and burns the bones of men
Bare where they lie ; and earth lies ashenly
Dead ; save for some uncertain dream of blue
Fallen here, yon, nay, everywhere about :
As though the sky were found unblistering.

“OH, TO WHOM?”

THOU woman, beautiful and glad and kind
As love's own soul ! Thou wonderful and wise,
Silently smiling for such sun, such shine
Of blue sky, green sea and the wide, white sand ;
Like sunshine smiling, like this crystalline
Beauty and wonder of the clean, warm world ;
Thou, sitting silently and smiling ; thou,
Perfect, a world to worship, power and peace
Call'd woman, and divine — peace in thine eyes,
Peace in thy pure smile and thy smooth, wide brow
And in thy form, flesh moulded without flaw :
Thou, peace ! — And I may sit beside thee thus
Worshipping silently (yet smiling too)
Thee, of thy world ; and wonder that the day
Can hold divinity so worshipful,
Even this deep-eyed, crystalline, soft day
Contain within its world more worshipful
A world than clouds or sky or sands or ocean,
Containing thee. I so may sit and smile
Silently. And if silence seem to me

"OH, TO WHOM?"

Someway not all our hearts were made for ; when
Some hour I needs must yearn to speak, pour forth
The worship that is in me, praise aloud
This wonder and this richness of all things ;
Make known the marvel that thou art : made known
That, hearing, thou mayest grow more glad for worship
Musical, universal, reverent
Of all thou art ; if sometimes silence seem
Miscomprehension, unlike lucid love ;
If life necessitate a speech and motion,
O thou divine, shalt thou not hearken, lift
My life to level of thy truth of love ? —
Nay : for thou feelest all, feeling full love
Speechless for perfect commune. Shall I need
Rebuke, refusal of mere hearkening
To voice of mine ? Else, learn in silence here
Divinely so to smile in mute content ? —

Dear, I am no dead god to feel thy beauty
Of earth and air and ocean and of thee,
Nor passionately burst in speech, pour praise
Unto this firmament of sands and ocean,

EARLIER POEMS

**Sun, clouds and skies, all thee ; speak passionately
World's divine-human love and longing forth
Large as I may ! — Lo ! that thou wilt not hearken,
Hearken, is grief too great. I am a man.**

A DIALOGUE

“ LOOK, love, where easterly beyond yon isle
Glows the gold moon ; and all the wave between
Is saffron. And a flush of westering day
Tints opal the near face of things : these tops
Of forest which from this wild eminence
Slope seaward ; oaks and many a towering pine.
And these are voiceful with the serious speech
Of this soft west-wind from the after-day,
A murmur and a whispering musicwise
Like wash of tone-tint widely through the night.
These are the sights and sounds. Look, love ; and
hear —

That we may seriously and like some cloud
Receive into our hearts this solemn light
Of aftermath ; and in our still night-souls
Be luminous, brooding o'er land and sea. —
Fancy the fate of him who as a cloud
Not luminous but utterly alone
Misses or sun or day-responsive moon ;
Floats fed but by the stars ; love, feel for him.

EARLIER POEMS

We are not like him. We are like yon cloud
Which, fed by stars at will, receives none less
Into its heart this solemn aftermath
Of sun and of the sun-responsive moon ;
Still sweeping seaward with the soft west-wind.”

“ We are not like him. Would we were more like ;
In this our hour of solemn marriage-rite
Of earth, air, ocean, night or day, more like
His nobler loneliness, the absolute poise
Of him star-speculant, sublimely sole.
He in his loneliness’ sublimity
Is star-stuff, yea, and night and day ; alone
Earth, ocean, sun and moon unto himself —
As were not we, for all night’s serious vow. —
Would (almost !) each alone were self-sufficed ! ”

“ Nay, love ; but were not our sufficiency
Still his, his most, more self-sufficient, but
By being, beyond his insight, through and through
A sweet supremacy, a focusship,
Worldhood and unioning of things that are

A DIALOGUE

(Ay, who, but such as we, might be assured ?)
Beyond his ken who lonely alone
Unions but less of world ; hath comradeship
With stars, maybe, yet only by some vague,
Unhuman half-light indistinctively
Of reference in soul to earth or ocean,
Dayspring or day-responsive moon ? Ah, love,
For we are All-splendour ; are one
With self-completion. And the star-fed soul
Is God but in and through our holier heart. —
Look, love, where easterly yon moon responds
The sun-love ; and all earth and ocean, air,
Daylight and night-light in yon cloud between
Are bosom'd, luminous on the west-wind.”

MELOSPIZA

FULL in my front, straight to the sun he sang
His song. And I have heard ; and comprehend. —
There is no wonder in the world like this,
The supreme art-achievement. — Love he sang.
And in so singing synthesized a world ;
Symphonized utterly an universe.

Plainly. — An inconspicuous, small bird
Mottled and fluff'd of plumage, here and there
Streak'd chestnut on an undertint of gray.
Calmly. — A brisk impertinence tongue-tied
By dint of bustle, of an agile, deft,
Impudent robbery of sod-hid seed.
Softly. — A rustling in the brush, beneath
Old, autumn, dead things and the tangled stems
Of storm-thresh'd vineries. When suddenly
A flutter and leap ; and plump upon one stretch
Of naked twig aloft at level of
My moveless eye, and breath-to-breath with mine
Unwhispering lips ; close, so that sun and sky

MELOSPIZA

Sphered us two as one centre ; in the splendor
Of spring-shine and the quivering atmosphere
He sang. Three flute-notes and a warble, a trill
Of half one hurried instant : and 't was done.

'T was done. The full throat and the vibrant tongue,
The sky-directed, open gape were proved —
If just by their infinitesimal
Focusship fix'd of universal sky,
Of sun and earth, spring and the singing soul —
My soul, mine intimate vitality!
Ay, for I heard ; and comprehend and worship
For art-achievement in an absolute love.

II

POEMS OF NATURE

MID-MAY

LIFE is too young, the sap and song of it,
For quiet, firm, robust philosophy,
Mid-solstice of the million-marvell'd mind ;
Too young for ripe solidity mature
Of the midsummer's noon. But sap with song
Leaps to the making of maturity,
Surges and swells and bursts in million-marvell'd
Newness of swift growth tremulous for delight ;
Half-wondering for the evanescence ; strong
Yet tender, delicate-leaved ; weak miracle
For gossamer, green, soft subtlety of strength.
Spring leaps mature in many a marvell'd meaning
Of mid-solstitial symphony to-be ;
Spring leaps mature ; even as solidity
Rich of midsummer's noon and firm, robust,
Full chord of green-grown June's self-questioning
Interprets still but spring, but sap and song
And poesy young of May's old miracle.
Life is too young to feel life's age-completion
Complete in world's new youth. But sap with song

EARLIER POEMS

Show substance of June-felt maturity.—
How feel philosophy alive, save song
Leap to be sap and surge and bloom of it ?
How sing, save strong in million-marvell'd mind ?
Wherefore be song philosophy's fit speech !
Wherefore let spring sing, meaning the full June !

Ay, all the year 's in each least blossoming ;
All the world, all the search of soul that seeks,
In every flower and blade and budded sheaf
Of the young-grass'd lowland and the shimmering,
Gossamer woods ; ah ! all the power of proof
In the weak, tentative unfolding ; truth
Through the frail metaphor ; fragility
Year-universal by the throb of it !
There are fluff'd ferns unfolding their soft fringe
Of feathery fronds beneath the cool May-wind
Low-linger'd over the marsh ; or, 'mid dank mosses
Where wind nor sun save fitfully falls in,
Uncurling palely their pearl-featured front
Spread backward-broad to feast and fill from air
Full of their verdure of the massier June

MID-MAY

Mature. For 't is the richness of the brake
To-be that makes the meaning beautifulst
Of the May-swamp. And unto the May-swamp
New notes, like delicate dew or sun-shower spray'd
Liquid-cool from the myriad-moted beam
Aslant, fall flowery from the bough where birds
Make sound of the sap-music in May-mind,
Make bubbling, overbuoyant blossoming
(Well-ware how blossom-burst and lilt of tune
Bring the blush'd fruit; unaware how ripe-juiced fruits,
Seeded, eternalize but vernalhood)
For steep'd cells and the fibrous strength to-be;
For world's truth, universe of throat's own tune.—
How should the May-bloom cease; how, the furr'd fern
Desiccate to a stiff senility,
Spring-song turn fruitage and through fruit decay?
How, poesy age as to philosophy?
For the very seeding, for the forward pulse
Of fresh sap, fresh song; for the vitalizing
Through all the veins of fresh, succeeding spring
Of a new meaning! Firm philosophy,
Fact-conscious foliature of grown June-time

EARLIER POEMS

(Yielding to mirth and marvel of May-mind
Meaning for miracle) needs yet miracle,
Spring-heart, spring-hope, spring-innocence anew
Fresh out of fountains of its past-won faith
Year after year ; that so, by pulsing back
Through fall and fall, ever the new-won faith
Of June shall live not sole by memory, live
In heart's upsurging of ensuant spring
Perpetually ; that spring to spring shall be
Ever ascension, integrated growth,
Fulfilment loftier of less-prophecy,
Live reconciliation through dead June.
E'en as May-song, made meaning, fruits and fades
In wisdom of the million-marvell'd mind ;
E'en as world's poesy grows mature, truth-stale
Philosophy ; so truth world-conscious seeds
Self-life in death of the world ; so to spring ever
Poesy, rich innocence, beauty more and more !

SPIRIT

CLOUDS cool and luminous-moist as moonbeams float
Pale, liquidly, in morning ; and cool rain
Falls shadowy here and there down through the
blue,

Down on the dew-cool'd, morning green below
Of the new woods ; that in the rays of the sun
Earth, clouds, soft rain, dew-mists and verdure
gleam

A freshness and an inward lucency ;
Sunshine in earth as earth in sunshine shown.
Out of the cool-blown, moon-like clouds the rain
Drops on the luminous land ; that the wet land
Sparkles in sun's quick beams, each bud and blade,
Briar and bloom'd tree-top bejewell'd bright ;
Each bud by focus of enorbing drop
Sphering the sunrise, each a full world-dawn ;
Each bud and blade a life, a full, small world,
Cosmos enorb'd in cosmos, sphering so
Beauty complete, organic, self-sustain'd
In every heart through inference of all.

EARLIER POEMS

'T is a day-dawn of beauty through all things.
Lush meadows, emerald-sheen'd in morning, slope
Velvet with undulation soft, spread wide
To slant beams of the sun ; or, in the gloom
And shadowing of the eastward forests, purpled :
Each blade an inference organic through
Sunshine and rainbow'd mist — wide atmosphere
And the still-dropping rain and clouds and sky
Contributors to beauty of each blade :
Spiritual so. (And shall not these weak sheaths
Exude new moisture, new-breathed atmosphere,
New clouds and rain again that grass shall grow ?) —
Behold the borders of the wood : low stems
Lean toward the meadows and the cloud-canopies
Above in the sun ; they burst, and from their buds
Spread tissuey the translucent, web-like leaves
Frail, gloss'd and hovering on the waft of the air
For buoyancy and nurture. These by need
Of the foster-rain and of the stimulant shine
Are whole and beautiful and spirit-real
For power through dependence, organized
Sustainment through such instability ;

SPIRIT

Mutual want; reciprocal, sweet need ;
Drinking in, drawing up, amalgamating
Moisture and pasturage to breathe again
An atmosphere out into the young noon ;
By metamorphosis one mutual self.
Nor is the unioning in beauty, self
Organic of the maybuds, otherwise,
Which through the pine-sod pierce ; anemones
Of crimson'd youth and age-blanch'd flower, the yellow
Lily call'd adder's-tongue that to the rain
Flutters and trips with leaf's smooth, mottled wing.
And the clean, cup-like blooms of shrubb'd blueberries
Or wildly-delicate columbine none less
Drink in and render forth through the wide air
Sweet interchange of pasture and of health.
To name the multitudinous upspringings
Organic of new, morning beauty (life
Of the whole world in each conglobing whole,
Each cosmos through each cosmos) were a work
Of wonder without end.— Lo ! the tall trees
Are blithe of blossoming, are amber, golden,
Purplish and crimson ; tremulous, faint pink

EARLIER POEMS

Against the high clouds shimmering ; or, within
The sun-deep, sapphire, cool sky-spaces, glowing
In marvel indescribable for spirit
Drinking in, breathing out, over the earth.
Even brown loam and gray-faced rock in the sun
Are drinking, rendering, organic by
A chemic congruence of elements :
Whole beyond bound in cosmos, everything !

For all the world is morning-whole in beauty
Spiritual for new breath perpetually ;
Infinite for inversely-infinite
Organization within organism,
Self-world-determination. Lo ! for sun
Manifests sun by atmosphere and earth ;
Earth, self-seen in the sunshine, through each growth
Knoweth a cloud-fluidity in all :
Conclusive as the soul, being one therewith.

SOUL

THERE is intensest heat thrill'd through all earth
Quivering, reeking with sun-saturate,
Upshimmering redolence ; scent smoke-like steaming
From all leaf-pores of forest and of field
Up through the tremulous, fervent atmosphere
From earth as for wide altar, incensewise
Spread through the cloudless heaven's hot vault to
 veil

The presence of the omnipotent, to hide
Splendid beneficence would burn too bright ;
Though to the veil'd face of the god earth's prayer
Is green and soft and glad to gaze upon.
Incense earth offers ; for the power of the sun
Thrills into strength a thousand thousand things,
Flared fires of sap-life lifting everywhere —
Green tongues of lambent, gleam'd fervidity —
Up out of smouldering rock and loam and mould
With odorous fume and pungency of blaze —
Revivified. For everything of earth
Lives but by interchange of strength for strength

EARLIER POEMS

Now most, through springtime for such strength of the
sun;

Now most, when yet an incense in hot haze
Veils the strong sun; now most, when interchange
Of breath for breath, of blaze for blaze, half-hides
The fountain of high fire: yet hides not him.

For earth's affinity, by aureole
Flared up to sun's affinity (exchange
Of fire for fire, of immanent return
From flame's effulgence for effulgent gift
Immanent) makes of sun, earth, atmosphere
One mutualism; makes of odorous woods,
Reek'd fields and furrow'd, fumed plough-land fit figure
Of facts' infinity by interflux —
Nor god nor creature, prayer nor incense teeming
From earth to earth's omnipotent; but incense,
Prayer, praise or love the omnipotent, whose sphere
Is day, spring's mutual interflux of flame.

WHITSUNTIDE

THROUGH many days endured a drouth: the heavens
Heartless, serene, smiled sneeringly; no soul
Shone in the shallow, clear, untroubled sky
Of sympathy, no shade of sorrowing
For sun-scorch'd earth; but day by day the sun
Flared white-hot on the wound of earth to blister,
Cauterize but not cure the searching sore;
And the dry moon came dewless to day's thirst.
And ceaseless prayer with fervid sacrifice
To the hard heavens from earth sent incense up,
Meek exhalations from the bosom of
Ocean and fever'd lake and languid stream,
Propitiation by burnt-offering steam'd
Of earth's best moisture for the softening
Of dry heaven's hard heart; even the parch'd fields
Exuding a crisp, sere self-sacrifice
Each of its best. And yet the drouth endured.
Not by the plaint and painfulness of earth
Seem'd the high, hard, dread heaven's heart stirr'd.—
But swift

EARLIER POEMS

Came there between the heaven and the earth
A great, moist wind from the cloud-regions over
The south sea and beyond the horizon-zone,
Alive ; a great, wing'd spirit outspread between
Dead heaven, dead earth, and reconciling both
Into one heart and hope ; being born of both,
By mutual wonder-woof half-witlessly
Of prayer and prayer's acceptance. Though the
heavens
Seem'd to deny and knew but to deny
Earth's prayer, and earth but helplessly to plead
In isolation utmost each from each ;
Yet was the heaven's heart open'd though he knew
not,
Open'd by pity whilst he yet denied,
Open'd for incense and burnt sacrifice
Mingled beneath the heavens over the earth ;
That, when world's great wind came leaping, alive,
Up from the regions of the oceans, far,
From the cloud-chambers of the envaulting vast,
Was the world ripe for its awakening : rain
Pour'd from the turbid, piteous skies down on

WHITSUNTIDE

The faint earth through the bosom of the breathing
Of the great, moist, live wind.— And there is laughter
Now of near sun in heaven ; now upon earth
Green things drink in and feed upon and fill with
Power and perfection of wet warmth inflow'd :
New life, new interchange ; dead poles call'd heaven
And earth, proved tropic, axial from the first
As now ; in gyre of rain's quick pantheism —
Their spirit, one great, moist wind infusing all.

SPRING-MOON

THERE is moon-motion through the living night,
Moist and awake with all sweet, wandering scents
And whisper of the washings of the wind.

Here is some shelter. But above (beyond
These needle-muffling pines, this siffling sway
Of silvery, slim leaves of the gleaming oak
And tender-poised, new, delicate, lithe birch)
Is a wild, wing'd sea-wind fill'd with the moon
And murmur and moisture of the moon-soak'd sea ;
An ocean-nurtured, strong wind, salt and laden
With flowery, fresh breath of the bursting foam ;
A wide wind soaking-up the spume of ocean,
Sucking-in, drawing-down and sweeping-on
Moon-moisture over the dim, silver'd land.
And like the motion and slow murmuring of
Moon-saturated ocean are the music
Rhythmical of the shadowy woods ; the mist-wove
Pulsings poetic of the gossamer grass
Dank through the fields ; to metrical sweep of the wind

SPRING-MOON

Nodding (like dance and dive of moonbeam-frosted,
Drift-foam) in orbited elasticity,
Fleck'd on the undulating bend and lift
Of the wash'd field-floor beneath the ocean-wind.

For, in the potency of the fair, fresh moon
And of the moon's moist wind, all land like sea
Is tremulous, surgent as with whisperings faint
Of moonbeams blown like summer-wandering dews
Through the bland air and over earth and ocean—
One luminousness, as of night alive.

QUIET

AN odor as of moonbeam-blossoms, scent
Of the sweet, white moon through the moveless leaves
Falling and feasting well the dreaming world
With perfume, with the dew-mild, cool delight
Of apple-bloom, fogg'd grass, liquidity
Of purplish lilacs, sensuous breathings forth
Amingle with the moon to seem its soul,
An effluence and a fluorescence floated
Mistily languid through wan atmosphere —
A moth with fluff'd whirr of his soft, furr'd wings
Wanders awide and vaguely ; in moonlight
Visible like some indolent apple-blossom
Lifting and falling loose through the still air.

It is a picture of the purest peace,
Yet fill'd with pulsing life. Dew, moon and flowers,
Fogg'd grass and perfume and the languorous moth
Are peaceful, beautiful but by their breathing
Of light, of moisture, sound or sweetness forth :
Each heart and life a focussing for life

QUIET

**Of all hearts else ; dew, moon and flowers and moth
In almost-silence yet a power, a peace
Alive — as peace is world-whole passioning
Equable ; liquid effluence mutually.**

FORCE

A STRONG wind as of winter is awild
Through the warm, summer woods, urgent, compelling
Green boughs to utterance of music, moving
The sun-world with emotion to a song.
Even the moist underwood is scattering too
Dew-pearls and dew-toned, liquid notes along
The flood of the vigorous air. And flower and fern,
Brimm'd of sweet incense and bewilder'd over
With honey-wine, spill largess of their marvel
On the damp floor of the forest ; that the wind
Is rhythmic for the throb of metrical drops
Pulsating, pattering, and for swirl of boughs
Blade-laden with a pendulous foliage. Earth
Is one rich splash, rich wavering of plumes
Through the green wood-world. And tree-tops above
Are chanting like a sea, with gusty, seething
Sweep of the pine-caps and the tufted surge
Of frothy hemlocks, with the burst of oak
Rough as of heavy foam on rocks. The woods
Above, below are wroth like a wild sea

FORCE

Green, strenuous-voiced; with flashings of a spindrift
Spray'd, sun-spark'd from the leaf-lilttings and quick
shafts
Of sunshine darting into the dim depths.
The woods are all one ocean-voiced, plumed bird,
One feathery-foliaged ocean greenly gleam'd.
And blown birds from the shoals of such a seething
Wing a wide way out over this green ocean
With froth-like whirl beyond the hoary burst
Of the boughs, birds swept and windily battling with
The ponderous air and with the driven foam
Below or driven flecks of the flurrying cloud
Swirl'd through the blue above. And the sun's light
Flashes from their gloss'd wings as from the leaf-gust
Of the flashing forest or the sea's sun-soak'd spray.—
For ocean under the gale is a spume-forest
Full-leaved and lusty-bough'd, streaming awide
To stress of the sounding wind and steep'd in light
Deep to the roots of the quick-rifted waves
Gale-concaved. And the sea's bursting boom of boughs
Makes music of motion like the land's own voice.—
That blown sea and blown land like great, glad birds

EARLIER POEMS

**Are battling in their beauty, battling with
Their spirit of the blue sky, whose life and motion
Makes of all things a music-unioning ;
With the free spirit of yon swift-off-sweeping storm
Whose wintry-molten breadth beneath the sun
Flows down the east, withdrawing gloriously
As from a world for a world's work done — abiding
Still in the world by world's work done ; by waking
Morning to poetry ; earth, sea or sky
To bird-like animation metrical ;
To beauty of blithe unrest and sunshine wild.**

MIDSUMMER

IT is the unreap'd season when the fields
Are flood-tide high, are flush and mildly misted
Over with moonlight-film of silver seed
In the glumed beard and pollen-laden sheaf.
There is no glared, keen, crude intensity
Of heat's excessive zeal ; but mellowness
Serene in a replete maturity ;
No lavish-loose voluptuousness, no riot
Wanton nor waste of the world's strenuous strength ;
But bland mobility of throbb'd repose,
Firm pulse of power self-whole and self-possess'd.

It is the long-grass'd season. Multitude
Of sun-suffused, soft, moonlight-misted life
Dwells in the fields : the purple-globed, cool clover
Fluid to flux of the breeze ; and fluorescent,
Wing'd irises, blue-bird-like, lucent-vein'd
Liquidly fluttering — brooding through the noon—
To surface-swell and ripple of wind-wash'd green.
And red wood-lilies preen and peer upon

EARLIER POEMS

These people of the deep from the safe shore
Firm-footed ; while along the grass-lapp'd land
Freshly luxuriate in the solstice' surge
Meshes of undulating vine, convolved
With roses, lapsing gleams of the June foam :
All rich, reposeful in mobility,
Mildly mature as a midsummer's moon.
And moonbeam-blossoms umbellate of elder
Canopy the dim deepness of the grass
To twilight coves, whose echoey, lisping murmurs
Whisper the stirring of the heart of the weed ;
Where the dwarf'd cornel and stout pulpit-plant
Take root and cling within the wash of the tide.
Here are the many-finger'd, legg'd and finn'd
Creatures of shallow seas whom the rank flood
Cramps in their cavern-quarters : dusk-eyed moths
Dreaming away world's plenitude of light ;
Sheath'd beetles busiest foraging ; blue wasps
Drifting and darting, shivering the vague fern ;
And warm bees walking in the bottom-weed
For chillness and relief to laden wing.
And suddenly some lithe leviathan,

MIDSUMMER

Scale-coil'd in forest-fastness of dun earth,
Starts, slides and sweeps off into the unreap'd
Beyond, beneath sun's sooth deliciousness ;
Leviathan, startling the sloth of the wave,
Churning to spume, glint-bubbled blanch of spray,
The swiftness of his thridded path and leaving
Flexures subsiding wide along the shore
And voice of heart of the grass in hollow cave.
Spiders spin too from crest to crest of the green,
Wind-wavering ocean net-like, filmiest traps
To stay wing'd things to prey upon ; but beams
Of the hazed, opal noon show these one sheen
Pale, iridescent as of sea's concaves
At midnight ere the moon is at the wane.

It is the flood-tide season. The flush'd fields
Follow the fulness of the sun ; as ocean
Floods to the following of a summer's moon.
And the mild moon mature, when sun descends,
Glowes mellowly up out of the dun east
Over the moonlight-film'd and silvery-seeded,
Glumed beard and pollen-bristling sheaf of the grass ;

EARLIER POEMS

The cool, wide moon ; a silvery, gentle spirit
Bland, liquid-firm as solstice-flowering fields
Or moon's own ocean's luminous, molten flood ;
A power ; a multitudinous repose
Of beams in rich, replete mobility.

MORTMAIN

MOUNTAINS, and fog enveloping : the hills
Invisible, save near and yon an height
Bald, desolate, primeval peering up
To level of this desert pinnacle,
Swathed about by impenetrable mists
Of ocean ; an impervious, vague drift
Up from the unseen ocean-welteringness —
World nullified, made emptiness anew. —
World was not alway so. One hour agone
Glow'd the clear concave high of sparkling, clean
And vivid sunshine ; far beneath, the sea
In blue-bright, silver panoply outspread
With glittering isles and shimmering sails athwart
These mountain-bases ; and these forest-hills
Radiant of verdure in all marvel-shapes
Of summer splendidness beneath the sun
Steam'd odorous, alive with bloom and bird. —
Nor in this solitude of stagnant fog
Is world below quite breathless ; for a fume
Of pleasant, spruce-wild, honey-tingling scent

EARLIER POEMS

Steals upward mingling with the moistened salt ;
And the voice of a bird, the tinkling, bell-toned tongue
Of the thrush, upbubbling from the dead of the deep,
Mounting and thrilling-through the void of the sky
Till the vast and vault are heart and breast of him ;
Till all the misty nothingness, denuded,
Nebulous, old obscurity seems full
To overflowing of the swelling hills
Still verdure-vivid, of the radiant sea
And sparkle of the blue and breath of the green.

World-vacancy, how world-impossible !
Ever some pinnacle, some isle above
Fog-oceans, sole-surveyor of the deep,
For whom indeed the dark shows visible ! —
Hark ! and the bird-song ! Soft ! The breath of the
pine !

NOON

ENDLESS an hoary-hearted, gray-grown sea
Bursts on the gaunt, gray sands : an agèd shore
Strengthless and sapless in a withering glare,
Stiff-baked and parch'd save for the beating, salt,
Sere surge of ocean. And a ghostly presence
Of gray-grown mists from grizzled sands and gaunt,
Foam'd ocean fumes and stealthily out over
The young, green land through earth's sunshine is
spread—
A shroud and sepulchre morn-saturate,
Sepulchring, saturating world's sunshine.

Gray vapors so from borders of old ocean
Brood above land's young, green futurity
Where crops are ripening, broad with gossamer breath
Through filmy oat-fields whose fresh-seeded husks
Hang pale in tassell'd tremulousness. The mists
Make summer-sea-like the tall, pendulous oats.
And undulations of soft breath of the beach
Pass, wave-pulsations, over the blown breadth

EARLIER POEMS

Of bristling barley ; and of mellowing rye
Trouble its tawny-hued fecundities
As with heart-beatings of primordial floods
Inheritant. And over the long grasses
The beach-breath floats in foggy fleeces, shrouds
Their shoal, warm surging to confound the fields
With sea's horizon and the sphering sky.
And along oozy watercourses, where
The slack tide-inlet in the marsh absolves
Its brackish blue, the white fog lingers, steep'd
In moist, hot sunshine and the glooming green,
Making of marsh and fluid ooze an union,
Sea both and shore : as newness of the world
By perpetuity is endless eld ;
Young, green land but as old, hoar-hearted sea :
Land, all, or ocean ; sepulchred in mists
Unioning, saturating world's sunshine.

MARSH-MUSIC

A SONG of lands low-lying : moist July
Ripe in repletion of green wilderness
Grown rank and flowery fine ! The delicate iris
Yields place to bright-spiked pickerel-weed. Wide lilies
Spread open-bosom'd to the quickening sun
Abroad upon the blue-gleam'd, molten pool.
And flat, glazed pads bear burden of fat frogs.
Fish leap. And many a purple, gauzy-vein'd,
Swift-hovering, darting dragon-fly makes flurry
And film-like blur to brush the polish'd bog ;
Evaporating (to a cobweb) imaged,
Sheen'd sky and bladed banks — where on the banks
Tall eupatorium twilight-pink, flat-cluster'd
Lifts dark its leafy stems. And sweet spiræa
Weighs warm the luscious air with white, wan, weedy
Odor of honey loved by butterflies.
And song in succulent sunniness issues out
From breath of the marsh in bubbling music. Birds',
Bees', all quaint manner of insects' notes, cicadas'
And shrill mud-crickets' ; song spills everywhere

EARLIER POEMS

All over the land low-lying ripe in the sun ;
Song, fine for purple and golden growth, for glory
Of moisture and green, flowery wilderness.—
How make more joyous song than warm July ?

A CEREMONIAL VERSE

HERE is wild altar. And an incense wreath'd
Of music melts along the envaulted, dim,
Groin'd dome above of canopied rib-boughs
Shadowy : music of a myriad mild,
Croon'd wood-notes echoing cool through hollow dusk
Of twilight leafage. Here are censer'd voices
Chanting their canon-strict, in consequence
Symphonic, cloistral through the sacred shade :
Tone-dedication to night's festival.
And ritual service, for the sacrifice
Of soul to soul in self-devotion, sings
The bridal in the ceremonial scent
Of pines' aroma : monotone-response
Low, broad, impassion'd as of priest. Nor hush
Of wing'd assemblage through the serious aisles
Is wanting for world's warrant ; to the vow
Witness sufficient of the woods, with some
Swift stir as of an eye to start and see.—
Bring to the bridal savor of sweet turf,
Sanctity of soft moss, enveiling fern,

EARLIER POEMS

Shrine of inwoven ivy ; consecrate
Cool-chaliced nectar to the forest-font ;
Bless these to furnish bridal. Be the breeze
Murmurous not alone with wandering moth
Nor muffled quite in dew ; that pendent boughs
Above, beneath night-skies shall shake and show
Luminous wonder and far worship, stars
Of still fire flaring and some meteor-gleam,
Flash'd for life's secret of the mystery,
Light's self-consuming ardor unconsumed.
Bring these to blessing : for the bridal's breath
Gives consecration ; and earth's soul were whole.

Here is wild altar ; and the nuptial earth
Stands wedded ; for the wide world's want 's assuaged.
It is close-woven night. Rapt atmosphere
Feels exhalation of atomic heart
In heart, warm vapor within vapor, dew
Globule to globule coalesced to seep
Absolved of turf-pore through the spongy mould :
Moisture in metamorphosis ; earth, air,
The holier by precipitance and death :

A CEREMONIAL VERSE

Perpetuation but by passage, pulse
Out of old longings nebulous to new
Marriage, completion in life's change and loss.
So through the solemn forest : cell with cell
Of veinous tissue, as with bridal's breath,
Breaks to the impregnation, meek conceives
Sap to the framing of ingenerate
New cell — leaf's reconciliation, life
By procreant passing. And night's cloistral sound
Vibrant, symphonic is but wedded voice
Of chord-rasp'd chord, transmuting throb of power
To power's metempsychosis, act's relapse
Dyingly distant, ever-widening sphere
Of married molecules, an unioning
Existent but by ceasing, on and on.
What of the ritual of the flowers ? Shall moth,
Nestling to nectar'd lurement, bear on breast
Fertility for sacrifice of sweet,
Germinant potency of the seed to-be
For rapine of heart's nurture ; and world's heart
Not recognise seed's reconciling, right
Exchange of death-through-life for life-through-death ;

EARLIER POEMS

Not realize world-assurance for world-fear,
Selfhood for isolation, consciousness
Of love's divinity for love's dismay ? —
Bless to the bridal nought of earth ! Earth's soul
Is wide-initiate in perpetual pulse
Of union'd passing, self-pre-bless'd. World knows
Meaning of spirit's mystery and might,
Love's soul-virginity of sacrifice,
Self-realization by devotion. All
Is wild-wood altar. And the priestly earth
Stands wedded. And the bridal earth breathes whole.

CONSECRATION

THE year fills to the fall. A frosty feel
Clarifies air, precipitates all fume,
Fever and frothing of earth's flood-tide time
Down out of opal atmosphere ; that flowers
And fields, brown-gold and mauve and neutral hues,
Yet gleam gem-like and clean for crystalline
Purification of the perfect world.
It is earth's custom so to consecrate
Life as by life's completion unto death ;
Bring forth, bear beauty in fecundity ;
Just for the absolute lustration, rich,
Perfect, the ultimate passing. At this hour
Of the first cold, crisp frostiness and fear
For final dissolution, dwells all earth
Never more open, placid-proud and pure,
Firm in self-dedication : sanctity
Virgin, of summer laid in fall's dead bed,
Love's realization in life-sacrifice.

The year flowers to the fall. Earth's consecration

EARLIER POEMS

Is intimate achievement ; perfectness
Earth's preparation for the backward thrust.
Nowhere is any interstice ; but life
Teems and is multitudinous. Earth's passing
Shows fruitage, ripening, an actualizing
Of spring's potential bud and blush ; of summer
Love's realization in life-sacrifice.—
Autumn's are these grain'd grasses ; autumn's too
The feathery asters and sweet-breathing herbs ;
Wild-helianthus, jewel-weed, the wand
Of sunny succory ; and the garden-glow
Of melon-blossoms, hollyhock, bright stock,
Gay marigold. And autumn's lingering birds
Call and are quoted by the echoey sky
In quavering, clear contentment. Fall's cool clouds
Are vivid, plume-like white, wing-like of motion
Through the high, sapphire firmament. And stars
By night are cold-distinct and tingling-crisp
As not in the vague dusks of earlier year.
For 't is earth's absolute perfection, freedom
Of world-rich, wonderful, wide fruitfulness ;
Flower, field and leaf, wing'd insect, worm or heaven

CONSECRATION

Each at top-teeming of fecundity
And all-appreciation functional;
Life at the crown-completion : even swoon'd autumn
Summer's strong wholeness and maternity —
Function-in-fulness of the organic year.

The year yearns to the fall. — Even as a bride
Bowers in a beauty of lost virginity,
Joy for love's power of sacrifice : so earth
Feels death life's life ; and floods and fills with it.

RESIGNATION

THE sun goes down on autumn's eldest day;
And stars come ; and the immanence of night
Droops over earth : and it is time to dream.
Time is it now to dream and perfect place
Where vastness only and enormous night
Include and ordinate, so sanctify
Vague gloom to solemn majesty ; when motion
Stands even as if transmuted into thought ;
And only hush'd and high-starr'd thought may take
Breath of the serious breeze ; when night with autumn
Broods and revivifies the various year.

Nothing in bitterness ! — Woods, nigh-denuded,
In those slant, pale beams of the morning sun
Have sparkled blithe with brittlest rime of frost
As though 't were springtide and the dew-dawn. Oaks
Have flared a still-insistent flame ; thin beech
Glow'd coppery as the bronze-smoked sky, more warm
Than bloom of mellowing rye-field when the year
Was newly motherhood. And sinuously

RESIGNATION

The fold-on-fold of vine, in cataract
Froth-figured, wave-like curl to rays of the sun,
Saffron and amethystine, wonder-flush'd
With glad glimpse of the orange-scarleted,
Bold berries in between.— Are such the shades
Of death-dismay for passing of the year ?
And day's own dying ! Shall the gorgeous glow
Of the blood-flamed cloud-region and the arch'd,
Empyreal atmosphere and lambent, rose
Heart-throbbing of the arteries of earth
Seem absolute despair unspeakable,
Irreparable for life's latest loss ?

Nor year nor sun 's at loss ; for these (by death
Of their heart's daytide and the flower of earth)
In feeling loss their law, transcend, absolve
And render over unto light and lust
Of spring's renewal and the dawn-to-be
Life's inmost moment of the dearth in them.—
Still is it spring by autumn's dreaming ; still
Remember'd day made manifest in night.

THE BARBARIANS

THE swart, strong mass of mountains couch'd at eve
For sleep profound and peace : their forest-flanks
Velvet with long glance of an autumn sun
Gold to the day-down ; and the twilight-shades
At mute, enveloping ascent ; and air
Lucent with purplish exhalation, sweat
Of steam, moist breath from day's work done : rough
hills

Calm, mild, gigantic, utterly at ease !
And a mist-purpled pool with swart, smooth breast
Mirrors those mountains in their mass ; a lair
Of cool sweet-water to the thirst-loll'd tongue
And sogg'd hoof of the rough, gigantic hills.
Swiftly the shades ascend ; the tawny-hued,
Autumnal foliage of the mountain-flank
Mellows to kindled amber ; burns ; is borne
Down out of day like ash with weight of night.
Till to day-gone a ghost comes ; opaline
Fluorescence, quickening of the gradual moon ;
A cold gleam from beyond the eastern ridge

THE BARBARIANS

Phosphoric-thrill'd as frost flared filmily
Forth through the dusk : and day, asleep, hath
dreams.—

Lo ! it is night upon the mountains, night
White on the mists of mountain and of mere ;
Night, with dominion of the enormous moon.
Lo ! the swart, rough-hooved hills sigh deep and dream.

Some owl hoots through the hollow night ; the boughs
Of crisp, frost-crusted hemlock from the concave
Of black moon-shade reëcho hollowly
The hoot ; and chill cliffs all make cavern sound.
Hark ! a loon laughs and laughs ; the peaks again
Have dream, and mock as cold, harsh hills alone
Laugh, wan with mists and moonlight ; and the frost
Creaks in the keen fir-branches. A slow bird
Heavily beating the mist-beams, with croak'd,
Uncouth cry from the uttermost frontier
Wings loudening way ; that gutturally loud
And more loud groan the gaunt, crouch'd cliffs in
dream.
Some scared jay screams ; from vacant, drear oak-trunk

EARLIER POEMS

Woodpeckers wail : the hoar hills scream and wail.
Some deer stamps on the dull sod ; the hard thud
Strikes flint, and shrieks ; and at the sudden speech
Of rock-tongued headlands the buck bounds, betray'd,
Startled and snorting from the thicket, breasts
With sparkling, seethy plunge and crackling crunch
Through thin shore-ice, shattering the lake's glazed
 moon,
Thrashing to myriad tinkling discs and shrill,
Metallic phosphor the black deep. The steep
And flinty-horn'd, chill mountains clank like steel.
Till on the night, heartening the old, cold moon
To burden of yearning and her pulseless mists
To motional effulgence, wakes a moan —
A mourning, mooting, lorn cacophony —
Monotonous from out the moss'd morass :
Night's longing both and loneliness intense
Throbb'd in the call. And those hoarse, shaggy mounts
Make moan ; mourn'd, contrapuntal calling ; share
Meaning and music with the self-sick need
Of moose in her mate-mooding. Yea, jar and shake
 they,

THE BARBARIANS

Obsequent, with a trampling, clash of horns
On bough, swift thrust and firm, persistent hoof
Of him, hills' monarch, who with strenuous tread
Starts, strains and staggers through thick, ripping stems
'Mid gorge-gloom'd fogs, obscure, moon-sepulchred,
Dread-rotting forests and the rock-brow'd peaks :
Moose, frost's hot despot and most monstrous dream
Of those ferocious mountains. He shall pass
Tireless pursuing. He shall burn a blood
That wars and hurtles as the torrent-rush
Of thousand rock-streams. Through impetuous night
The nightlong shall he pass nor pause nor swerve ;
Pass and keep passing. And the peace of him
Shall be by passion's perpetuity. —
Moose : through the forest an on-rushing rage,
Even from beyond north's broad ridge-back, beyond
Foreland and moorland and quick, tortuous flood
He comes and comes resistless through swart night ;
Lust's monstrous, mightiest vision of hills all.

Such are the savage visions of rough hills ;
Night's wrath, and wonder of primeval world's

EARLIER POEMS

Grim-hew'd, gigantic, sinewy unease ! —
Day breaks ! Black brooksides and the fury flanks
Glisten for gorgeous frostlight. Sleep-lock'd horns
Of the flinty ridge rouse up and sweep aside
The shrunk moon from the western vault. Hill-shapes
Rear, rise and shake night's icy, moon-born mists
From heavy shoulders' rough barbarity.
Soughs a breath-blare of breeze ; a quaffing draught
Sluices the lake, 'mid-stirr'd, to steely trough,
Crest-blaze. (A sun-warn'd flock of floating fowl
Wing flight with whirr and whiffling.) — And men's
curse
Snarls on the mountains ; and men's iron hand
Reeks with earth's sap of sacrifice. — Wroth world
Starts forth to fight ; to prey upon and feed from
Itself's own maw exhaustless ; strong, swart world ;
Scarr'd, gaunt, gigantic, cursed in hoof's unease ;
Tremendous, terrible, primeval ; passing
Resistless, grand, self-passion'd, calm ; ay, pulsing
Peace-fill'd by blood's ubiquity of wrath !

HIEMATION

IT is the first snow. And the scars of earth
Are cover'd. And oblivion descends
Over old agony. And every ill
Lies heal'd. And winter 's well.—

Snows, marbled to a reach of coiling surf
Beneath north walls, froth'd combers alabastrine
Of crystal-shimmering foam-frost in the sun,
Poised in pulsation overpeer the pure,
Plough-open'd lane like pendulant, frore fringe
Stalactic bordering jaws of a bluff-cove
Ice-lapp'd to stillness ; yet fill'd with the sun,
Iridescent, sparkled for a plenitude
Of fire-potential and the spring to-be.
Or, where on marsh crisp tides receding leave
Air-hung the sleety, crush'd or quaking caves,
These with the ray'd, prismatic sun shot-through,
Invigorate, flush as with a memory yet
Of June green and the oat-fields' flood gone-by.
That lightning'd life to-be with life-time lost

EARLIER POEMS

Blends and is intermingled, lies transfigured
In the instant, sun-soak'd snow-gleam. Even the blind
Shades of sepulchral, drift-tomb'd trees bow'd down
By burden of broad branches, their best dusk
Yet bears to overbrimming the brave blue
Of wind-wash'd, sun-steep'd skies above, beyond
Spruce-arches and chill-canopied, dark boughs.
That shine or shade alike, for crystalline
Infusion, catch and care for, make alive
In snow-light, the wide life of sun-steep'd space;
And are in winter's wealth world-reconciled,
Earth-season'd to the season of the sun.

Here on the meadow-pool a breeze has blown
Clean the keen ice ; that winter's world below,
Life liquid-lens'd beneath the sun-glazed plane,
Shows clear, cool, curiously with wavering glooms,
Fleck'd twilights, flexures of conglobing beams
On deep-brown bottom-mould like sheen and dance
Of shine on shallow, sun-warm'd, weak-waved beaches
In summer-time long-gone of wrinkling sands.
Lo ! 'neath the ice small caddice-worms in sheaths

HIEMATION

Aforth for foraging 'mid musty weeds ;
Trick'd yet in greenest cress ; that summer-hued
They bide by winter's welfare ; nor alone
Live well. For, builded by the pool, quaint mounds
Of muskrats—reed-stalks, matted leaves, shrunk moss—
Mass'd in old alder-clumps, rough-eaved, with snow
Thick-roof'd, strong-butress'd ; that the swart musk-
rat sleeps
Through long, wild nights whose very wildness yields
Austerest comfort, grim security
To the domed lake-dwelling ; while, below, the lake
Holds food, adventure, 'neath the glaze of stars !
Nor are the fields untenanted of folk
Through the snow-season. But the sifted snow
Serves for flake-tunnel ; larder large with nuts,
Cones, seeds ; intricate labyrinth of lithe,
Paw-padded passages — or the prick'd paths of mice,
Four feet close-cluster'd in the leap, with tail
Light-trailing fine upon the powdery track ;
Or lustier lift of squirrel ; the sprawl'd spur
Of a scrawn'd crow scavenging ; with here the sweep
Claw-like of broad wing-pens upon the plane

EARLIER POEMS

Of crystal pasture ; and the partridge' low,
Long, lazy lunge of stride.

It is the first snow. But oblivion
Hides scarce the scars of earth. For earth lives on
Self-reconciled with scars. For winter 's well,
Vivid, awake with wonderful, white strength
Reveal'd, prophetic of a snow-born spring.—
Who would regret that earth hath scars and aileth
All autumn long ; when winter is to heal,
Make well the ills of earth ; when else were nought,
No winter, nor no nurturing of spring ?
Who can regret our mortal ill, when else
White sympathy and healing grief's soft snow,
When else earth's peace, were meaningless ; when health
Of soul and sanity of daylight thought
Live but by pain and sin ; when winter, spring
Were nought but by old mourning of the mind ;
When every mourning were by meaning joy ;
Autumn, earth-worthy, for the fostering snow ? —
It is the first snow. And the scars of earth
Are cover'd. But reveal thereby her soul.

UNDER GLASS

HERE teems the sacred spark, earth's trust and troth
Of the splendor of the sun through the sere season ;
Lamp of the labor of the sleeping year. —
Stout pistils, plumping ovules, quickening-sperm'd
Pollen ; and parti-color'd spurt of plumes,
Petals, pale sepals and strong, emerald spread
Of leaf-stalks, netted, veinous for sluiced sap
In the cells ; and bees with workaday, dim din
Transporting, permeating, fructifying !
Color and fragrance ! Honey-hearted cups
For the bees to seek and suck of ! These are priests,
Torch-bearers, altar-vestals incensing
With choir and chalice in the temple here
The shrine of the splendor of the sun's own power,
The spark of the full-flare summer-flame to-be
When worship spreads and springs, not sole within
Sun-surfeit of the sacristy but, there
Uncloister'd out beyond in June's wild world.
These are the vestals of the vital spark,
Chroniclers, prophets of those protean days

EARLIER POEMS

When strength was, strength shall be of marriage made
Now but in nurture of the nobler few ;
Poets, love-devotees of the shrine, souls sure
Of the plenitude and permanence of flux
Procreant and the patience of sun's power :
Who waits world's hour to work his will in the world,
Working through these who wonder at delay.—
Toward the sweet, streaming sunshine the swift sap
In myriad cells starts up, swells, splits the husk
Of thousand stems, in countless buds exudes ;
Breaks forth ; and, blossoming, so blends in air
With infinite beams through the soft-steam'd sunshine.
Through the sluiced, swelling fibres myriad beams
Impenetrates, impregnate, burst to a bloom
The cell-bound sap ; blend and are interblent
To mutual permeation and communing,
Marriage and meaning in a myriad blooms.
Oxalis amber, opening with the shine
Of sun on the nigh-translucent petals, leans
Lithe, arch'd above blown beds of violets swathed
In glossiest leaves. Bush'd heliotrope beside,
Purpled dianthus and the wing'd, white pea ;

UNDER GLASS

Lance-leaved, clean oleander ; gauze-blown grape
Make marvellous the smell of air. And all
Draw from the dust or damp of loam such scent,
Power and pulsation of sap-union with
The ardency of sun's down-flaming stream ;
Each bloom a blending of the bloom of the world,
Ember and embryo of sun's procreant strength
In June-time when spring so to sap all things.
Jonquil and daffodil, cool, bulbous bursts
Of the beauty and beaming of the mellow mould ;
Primula perch'd and Psychic cyclamen,
Begonia bunch'd in scarlet pendants, velvet,
Furr'd cineraria : blossoms scant of scent,
Yet each a bountiful, bright, prismatic-hued
Vestment adorning light's self-sacrament
Through the dull season, scintillant, sun-soak'd
To fresh, firm flash of color, quick release
Of the dun loam in delight of open gleam.
And — for hush'd honey-smell, for honey-hues
Of delicate transparence umber-fused,
Yellow-of-lemon, streak'd, thrush-throated white,
With flush and blush and orience of rose—

EARLIER POEMS

Lo, shrubb'd azaleas, flawless spread of bloom
Fill'd with the bees and redolent of murmur
Bland as the anthem of a May ; but border'd
About with aureoled pea-spikes of the broom
And baubles of the spined acacia clung
Close in interstices of twilight, thick,
Gloss'd leaf-thorns ; all, symbols of some rebirth
Of earth to-be and patience of the passion
Of the frost. And broad along sun-facing walls
Peach, toned in tenderness of pink ; or flooded,
Organ-voiced effluence of the bridal-bloom'd
Blood-orange, stupefaction, faith-o'erpowering
Monstrance imperial of the priestly flame's
Transfiguration fumed, yet cloistrally
Veil'd with the intimate incense tropic-savor'd
Of insect-apt air-orchids ; or chord re-echoed,
Pathetic of atonement-won, from chalice
Of lilies in still, paschal glory, gold
Offer'd for flame-communion sap with sun !

Now is the splendor of the prime of these
Which, inflorescent, keep alight earth's lamp

UNDER GLASS

Through the sere season ; the sweet cycle of dreams
Which only keep complete the sleeping seeds
Of annual orbit ; in whose heart the splendor
Of ash-worn world is stored to smoulder, sparkle,
Spurt up and fling in shower of brands awide
A conflagration of all earth, awide
Through wood and field and gardenside ; secure
To seed, grow great and serve perennialwise
The splendor of sun's flowering of earth ;
Priests to the permanence of priesthood-lore,
Sun-foster'd to make proselyte sun's earth. —
Lo ! seedlings ranged of tissuey green in rows,
Slips, scions, novices of clostral nurture
Clipp'd from the culture of earth's green gone-by
For green June-holiday and festival.
Lo ! and, without in the world, wind, big with life
Got of the south, transfuses air with savor
And sweetness of the steam-exuding loam.
Snow swoons and fades from off the fields. A flush
Of rose-warm, amber, opaline blush-tints
Shimmers through tree-tops with the bloom and burst
Of sap through cells and sheaths of the swelling bud.

EARLIER POEMS

Lo ! is the torch alight ; and world awakes
To efflorescence. And the trust and troth,
Lamp of the labor of the sun, earth's gospel
Of priest and cloister and the culture pluck'd
Of poet-spirits and sun's choicest souls ;
The faith of the few in patience of the power
Of sun who works his will in will of the world ;
The faith of the prophets of re-birth of earth :
How strength, which was and shall be, still lives on
By permanence of passing ; stands fulfill'd !

THE GARDEN OF THE GULF

OVER the wide sea a warm, wild wind sweeping
Sweet, swift and mild makes of the foam froth-flowers
Quick, mild and moist ; a showery foliature
Of soft, salt-scented blossoming, a budding,
Blooming and frost-like withering-away
White on the swirl of ocean blue in the sun.
There are wild clouds shower-laden, sooth and dank
Like froth over the blue sky scurrying swept ;
Aloft, foam flowering forth from the wide wind
Out of its warm, south bosom ; a swift budding,
Blooming and withering through the atmosphere —
Ocean and azure sky alike one garden
Of vaporous iridescence, shower and shine
For mist sunsaturate, for petals woven
Of watery woof by sun's fine fingering :
Seasons successive, surge, burst, bloom, collapse ;
One multitudinous verdure, momently
Full-orbited in elemental year.

There are quick hearts and wild in sea's wide garden

EARLIER POEMS

Leaping like light and wonder of sunbeams
From flower to flower foam-crested. These with
 whirr
Of whistling wings and whispering, lithe flight
Flash silvery-vivid ; here, there, everywhere
One sheen, one hush'd incitement of desire
For tingling, froth-like life. These dash and drown
In honey-hearts of the salt-scented drift
Their crystal fire and flame. On crystalline,
Cool spume they pasture and the lambent lapse
Fluorescent, molten of blown pollen-dust
Spray'd from the crests of ocean. Such wing'd fish
Are bees of the garden of the gulf. — The clouds
Feed, too, their wing'd life. For the stream of the
 sky
Gleams with the glint of white plumes, in sunshine
Snow-like against the blue, but in the bosom
Of the cloud-hearts like bees or butterflies
Lost quite for lightning of the chalice. These
Call and make voice of the wild wind's delight
Tumultuous, flung down from the torn and tossing
Petals gale-shaken of the azure vault :

THE GARDEN OF THE GULF

Meanings of waters and wide winds and all
Mingled in motion of gulf's guardians,
The great gulls angel-wing'd. And multitude
Of purpled, tremulous shadowings deep down
In hyalescence of the quivering seas
Show burrowings of slow-throbb'd, subaqueous lives,
Low 'mid the matted roots of the wave-blossoms
Nurtured in cool and dimness of the deep.
And along ocean's weltering rush and roar
Frail, wingless, globose, iridescent things
Swirl, spread like bubbles bladdery down the flow
Of waves and winds, feeding from out the foam
With deft, long feelers. And these ever flow
And faint not. But perpetual frailty of
These whirl'd seeds through the sea's sere agitation
Makes of their faintness strength and permanence
To feed and fill well from the unwithering,
Live splash and lapsing of the gulf's great stream ;
To pasture, feed full of the great gulf's strength,
Of bud and burst and withering of foam-blossoms
(Blood-beats perpetual-born of ocean's power
Powerless ; one evanescence endlessly) —

EARLIER POEMS

**By equilibration of their life-in-death
Driven onward: as the great waves lift and fall.**

III

POEMS PSYCHOLOGICAL

EARLIER POEMS

**By equilibration of their life-in-death
Driven onward : as the great waves lift and fall.**

III

POEMS PSYCHOLOGICAL

EARLIER POEMS

**By equilibration of their life-in-death
Driven onward : as the great waves lift and fall.**

800

II

POEMS PSYCHOLOGICAL

EARLIER POEMS

**By equilibration of their life-in-death
Driven onward: as the great waves lift and fall.**

III

POEMS PSYCHOLOGICAL

THE SWIMMER

DROWN I ? — Nay, I attain and am with thee
Safe from the flood, and young and strong and warn.
To love ; who seem'd but then so cramp'd and old,
Cold and with boding as of Styx in me,
Chill'd for the Hellespontine flux and foam ;
Till, lo ! call'd I on thee and once again
Struck firmly forth and clove to the far shore
So swift I felt not effort ! — At thy feet
Now let me lie and dream a deathless love !

Yea, for we are as gods ! Had I but drown'd
Dreaming on thee, were Hades hurtless to me ;
Only pale immortality of love ;
Thine image faint and frail ever before me
As, lo ! thou sittest fair — and frail and pale ;
Now, now, I ween, half-fading so before me
Here on the dim shore by the dark-faced flood !
Ay, as thou faDEST ! (And I marvel much
How thou shouldst fade thus.) Thus the love in me
Would bide — half-faint — as now faint I, half-loveless,

EARLIER POEMS

Here before thee ! — Ah, losing love, like sense
Of thy white image and of dark-faced sea,
Dim shore ; yea, losing all : as though I drown'd,
Not grasp'd thee ! —

Though, in sooth, I scarce could grieve
Loss even of life ! —

Nought now : love, shore nor flood
Nor thou —

Who art thou ? What wert thou ? What shore ?
What flood ? —

‘Up bubbles all his amorous breath.’

CARRION

A PAIN of the sun, piercing with beak and claw !
A vulture-tearing, back, above in the brain ! —

Eternal tramping, tramping ! Ceaselessly
The forward lift of the foot; the forward swing ;
The forward footfall : but to lift again !
Ever the body forward bent; ay, bent,
I say, by burden of the pack too huge
For human, soldierly uprightness : yet
The spirit human, still human-erect ;
Forward, ceaselessly forward ! Here in the sun
I toil, still lifting, swinging, plodding : aye
Eternal tramping, tramping ; effort still
Immitigable, nigh intolerable,
Yet unremittent ; ever energy ! —
The day wears. There was once a white-hot way
Of sands and sands, blistering the soles ; struck up
Glittering, ah, insufferably glared
Against these eye-balls. That was long ago.
There was a stagnant jungle-side, lagoon'd

EARLIER POEMS

And evil-smelling, glistening horridly,
Ungently bristling serpentwise with fangs
And poison-virulent pestilence. That was
Long ago. There were multitude of men
My comrades, scuffling up the pungent dust,
Tramp, tramp, through mouth and nostrils parchingly:
A suffocation. That was long ago.
Men dropp'd by the way ; were left there where they
fell :

They could no more endure. (There was a bird
Descending on the dead !) I still endure.—
Now is no road, no jungle-side, no troop
Marching ; but this intolerable sun
Which tears the vital brain with beak and claw.
There was a space, the shivering road uprear'd
Stark in the face of me. I flung it back,
O'er-pushing, clambering, plunging with my soles
And shoulders till the energy of thrust
Levell'd the way. Which forthwith rear'd anew,
Front to face striking me. 'T was long ago. —
No road, no front-to-face blockade : but feet
Steadily lifting, swinging, falling on

CARRION

Forward ! And only I am here with the sun
Which pierces as 't would burst into the brain. —

What piecemeal tearing vulturewise ! What rip
And rend of the scalp and cartilage ! — I turn ;
Ward-off the ray with wrist and arm, defend
Face from the onslaught !—Whence this dusk I clutch ?
This solid, struggling blackness like a throat ?
Choked ? Strangled ? — Stretch'd in the startling night
lie I :
Death-grip of mine o' the gorge would feast too soon !

THE NOVICE

SOUL that this incense stifles ! Suddenly
Seem candle, censer, e'en the cross we crave,
But mummery, a tinsel and display
Where ne'er were substance. Fling the casement wide ;
Let the unpainted moon, the vital air
Of alpine altitudes, absolve this cell,
Purify vestments of the charnel-smoke
And signify a true sublimity
Of inward freedom. How these grisly peaks
Bear aloft horn'd and jutted crags to be
A world of fearless godlessness ; a scene
Of desolation verily, but grim
With irony at any orphanage,
With stern rebuke upon us hearts who seek,
Bereaved, a god — by slavish worldlessness.

Yet are we greater than our worldlessness,
Greater than such unorphan'd, godless world :
Who learn our orphanage nor faint from it.
Lo ! I will forth into world-orphanage

THE NOVICE

Of freedom, will be willess slave no more
To innocence, mystery and God. I crave
To learn aright night and this earnest moon
Of alpine effluence ; and be as one
Of these crags. Only, in the new resolve,
Let me be potent as nor crags nor moon,
Knowing world's good and evil, freedom and
World's fear of freedom. Let me be alone
Knowing my loneliness ; not then, as erst,
Lone yet deluded to companionship
Of stale chimeras.—

Hark ! — Yon bell, which tolls
The servitude ; and then these cringing cliffs
Which chilly echo back the master-tone,
Quavering the white light ! How the rich tints seem
To glow again unto the note that clangs
All nature to the sacrifice: obey'd
Even by these alpine altitudes since men
Have pray'd and praised these numberless, long years !
Shall dominance be ended? Shall there be
No iterance, no sequent voice to call
Insanities down to the nightly stint

EARLIER POEMS

Of labor, weariness and rest in faith
That truths are otherwise, that all we know
Of beetling precipice and direst blast
Are symbol, and the substance not yet shown
Nor understood e'en of obedience?

Pardon lip-blasphemy! — Behold, I turn
Dumb from my casement. Let the moon or stars
See me, if they in any wise can see,
Sink to my knees here of my cell alone,
In full and reverent companionship
With this dead idol whom my lips and heart
Still shall obey. Close but the cold air out!
It chills. I am not fit for that live world
Of fatherlessness and yon moon-gleam'd snows.
I should not know, I cannot dare conceive
A self-reliance beyond orphanage;
Day's light that needs no lamp; a freedom aye
Responsible through every concrete act.—
Let there seem emptiness beyond this pale.
Be there but incense; God: and me, His slave!

THE VIOLINIST

SO-FASHION, son ! Sweep the stroke smooth and suave
As folks approve ; not with such downright strength
Of splendid earnestness ! 'T were dubb'd grotesque ! —
Oh, but 't is genius, power beyond your sphere ! —
We learn to bow well, learn to fret the string
Quite at the common and establish'd nodes,
Fit for performance tickling eye and ear
Of the dilettanti, for attenuating
Some truth authoritative set before us
Just to be reinterpreted to them
(The blind and deaf to need such minist'ring),
Not re-created. Far less, lift we up
Feeling and fancy (might I call it soul ?)
For self-creation ! — So, so-fashion, son !
Play the piece deftly by the establish'd mode,
Press to the pale perfection, seek technique —
But no creation ! Son, forget the soul !

Ah, could but men be more musicianly ;
Hear once the fiddling, not a thousand times

EARLIER POEMS

Thus re-demand it ; ah ! ignore all else
In rapture of the unrepeating score
Soul-comprehended, free from sense at last
By understanding of the visual sign
Through one performance' pedagogy learn'd
Forever, as we learn sans any sound
To read and be at benefit by book —
By breve and semi-breve, by staff and point
Set silent here, yet eloquent beyond
Any distress of horse-hair, gut and board ;
Free from mere sense ; free even to surpass
Yon score authoritative ; yea, to create
Fresh music, inwardly indifferent how
The master made the old tune ; tuning yet
A phrase which savors of the master-make
By very virtue of original
Audacity ! — Ay, thus have I, my son,
In the strong spirit of hours as keen as yours
Years gone, betook me to the garret (great
With enterprise — was it the genuine,
High genius ?) where alone, unheard my bow
Fell noiseless, nor would fingers ache and smart

THE VIOLINIST

Nor eye grow blurry with the plaguing page ;
But music entering silently fill all
Reaches and confines of an universe —
Young once and dreaming of an art at birth
And radiant ; which aye is for the few
God-gifted ; nay, which is not yet, my son.
Ah, but the rapture and the dreaming made
An agony of every torturing rote
So keen, so piercing, that — I earn my salt,
Reputed skilful at my trade, a craftsman
Well-paid and well-applauded. — Yea, my son,
Ours is not greatness, high musicianship
Of self-dependence openly unique ;
But minist'ring which shall be greatly meant !
Dream generous dreams, be genius, genuine
As may be ; nor forget the soul ! But let
The agony of soul-relinquish'd (lost
Incessantly and irremediably),
Shot-through the quivering tones, teach unaware
This throng an hint of splendor earth shall learn
In other times by other strengths. Be yours
The splendor even in forswearing it ! —

EARLIER POEMS

‘Work, be unhappy’, but believe ! — Even so,
So-fashion suavely sweep the bow ; achieve
A recognised interpreting : but let
Earnestness twinge you to the finger-tips,
Music be misery : that your tragedy
Be power ! Let soul but rend you, rote by rote !

ONE WAY OF GRIEF

KIND sir, I am a strong, stout-working man,
Bold to bear sorrow — may such sorrow fall
As mine on you nor yours ! You see, I stand
Shaken, unstrung ; even though your sure support
Steadies me somewhat. Whence you found me stretch'd
Here on the stiff, stark ground—I thank you, sir —
I could not, though I tried till dawn, have raised
Body of mine but for your lifting hand.
For sorrow, sleeplessness and least of food
Weaken the well and strong till they like me
Weep as a child.— We buried her, my child,
Today. And the week's work is done. — I came
Forth in this chill and comfortless night-air
Under these strange, far stars and heartless moon
Here by the still trees for the comfort, sir ;
Their calm, so to be friends with and grow calm —
Out of my cottage. For, within, no stool,
No patch of carpet but cries out her curls,
Her lips and angel-laugh too clear and cured
Of earth for captive in my cottage. — Sir,

EARLIER POEMS

How came God grant a gift too good to keep ? —
No bit of homeliness and everyday
Where she sat, play'd her plays or croon'd her tunes,
Snatches of song her own ; where she with broom
Of fit, small size swept, dusted ever after
The clean-swept footsteps of her mother ! — Oh,
She had been sweeping in the passage (just
Five days ago, 't was Monday), proud and full
Of busiest house-work, whilst I sat nor saw
My morning's-news but casually made sport,
Joked at her six-year zeal as fathers use,
Her tireless will to work for work's sole sake
(No need of any end or aim for work,
Loved ones to work for, which we fathers need) : —
“ You 'll scarce work life-time long with such a will,
Eh, child ? ” But she : “ Father ! ” — she ran and wept
Wailingly : “ Father, what so hurts my head ? ” —
Then, she to bed in stupor ; nor awaked
Save in delirium, sir ; nor knew me more.
The mother ? Stricken from the first ; but breathes,
Lives, lies within — 't is of the child I speak.
Sir, you will say she 's better-off, now dead,

ONE WAY OF GRIEF

Than ever I could make her — surely, sir —
If saved such sorrow's possibility
And loss of all to work for ! — Sir, she was
Our only child. I used to read her tales
Of elves and goblins, talking trees — my rearing
Brought me to knowledge of old-country lore
And woodland fairy-facts. She 'd sit and hear,
Say nothing ; yet a seven-night thence she 'd sing
The whole tale word for word from first to end
Straight out of memory to a wonder-tune !
Every man, every woman loved my child.
I, sir, alone of men, my wife alone
Of women knew what, every morn, it meant
To wake at half-dream'd laughter, some soft whisper
Whirring about our room on wings from out
Her crib beside the bed ; safely to stretch
A hand and feel her two fists fasten mine
To cheek and sleep thus, that I might not move.
Sir, there 's no tale nor fairy-song now five
Long nights, nor morning-whisper nor love-laugh
In the cottage. —No, nor sleep for me nor mine ;
Nor shall be sleep till we sleep with our child ! —

EARLIER POEMS

Sir, I detain you ; thank you, sir ! There 's wood
To fetch in yet for the night — my wife needs care.
Ah yes, I 've ample work to do— my wife
Should die of this ; and meanwhile she wants care.
Sir, I 'll be strong again and tend my wife ;
Fetch in the wood. But, sir, save for my wife
I 've nothing. When she dies of this, I 'll be
But more unmann'd ; only more like to bide
Here as you found me prone without on the ground.

THE HERMIT

Ay, 't is a desolate twilight. The dull rain
Drops large in isolated clots upon
The soggy leaf-floor. And the leaves o'er-head
Shut out all sky save momently a cloud
Caught in the pine-tops, choked and sobbing there.
Ay, 't is a dismal time. Yet just a thrush,
Huddled and sogg'd as any old, brown leaf,
Makes music. And I, crouch'd below in the dusk,
Clasp close this rough trunk, hush'd as any tree
And moveless save for drip and serious splash
Of the constant rain on brow and breast ; 'am here
(Until your coming, brisk, in comradeship !)
Alone with fog and forest and this thrush.—
Loud, sir : the song has ceased ! I care not now
What wild thing else we startle, scare to wing
Or covert; but will sludge along with you
Supperward, head bow'd, feet at stalwart crunch
And rotty crackle over quick and dead
Of the wood-floor. What care I? You are no thrush ! —

EARLIER POEMS

Nay, friend ; you sure are more than any thrush —
Yet somewhat weak at woodcraft — say, too strong
In sundry human sympathies to heed
The tragedy of thus unsympathizing :
As I feel tragedy in being a man
Here and alone with thrush, twilight and storm.
You prefer friends intelligible, shun
Contact of creatures whose society
Is no society in sort humane ?
You prefer interchange of word and look
Couch'd in communicant convention, scarce
This isolation which we woodsmen know? —
Slowly ! — And plod not on that herb ! — Take heed
First of the primitive companionship
We find of the forest, very like indeed
To human sociability, with certain
Spice of an unsophistication, plain
Expression of opinion, even if less
Elaborate in the communal interchange !

Though first I will admit — he sings again,
Hark ! in the far depths (nay, I stick with you !) —

THE HERMIT

There 's nothing in the forest that 's not found
In measure richlier, wiselier, maybe,
In civilization ; I am no forsown,
Unforlorn hermit falsely hermit-like ;
Yet feel the fortune of yon hermit-bird :
Feeling the counter-implication how
Nor isolation nor companionship
Be predicate of forest-lore alone
Nor sole of man's society : but both
Are shared. There 's interchange of word and look
Scarce less complete in forest-lore than man's
Society, if but our estimate
Of satisfactory conference in each
Be based in ratio to the tragic rift
Respectively, take for criterion
The isolation which we woodsmen know,
In this our woodcraft, from these forest-things
No more intensely nor preponderantly
Than human failures at a fellowship !
Maybe, 't is the pettiness in this our rift
Of the woods which forces on us to the marrow
The civilization-tragedy : if more

EARLIER POEMS

Society in humans, then the worse
The inevitably incompatible
Failure to comprehend, be mutual
In men's assemblages — for me, for you.

Tomorrow, haply, may I revel in
The splendor, as the tragedy : not now ! —
Friend, gripe mine arm ! There 's somewhat in this
dusk
That sets me staggering, that craves a crutch !
Thanks, thanks ! you are stiff of foot to straighten me
And act my staff ? — Someway the loneliness
Of noblest wood-communion but makes more
Frightful-intense the apperception of
Our human loneliness, our fuller commune
We flaunt so glibly. — Yonder is the camp ?
That flare means man's civility ? — Chaff loud ;
Laugh-off the supper and the bedward time
With forced free-fellowship : for fear I 'll dream
A thrush sings through the hermitage of men !

AN ORNITHOLOGIST

'WHAT overbillowing of a melody mad' ?
'What untamed music' ? Oh, their very names
Mean each such twittering outburst rapturous
Of strange, abrupt, ingenuous euphony !
Lark, oriole, bobolink : to title them
Is song. 'Yet surely not for sheer bird-song
Haste you and hearken oft in the fields at dawn' ?—
Patience, a moment (yes, the tune of the thrush) !
I'm ruffled a bit, maybe, and must a little
Out-talk the art you 'd scarce appreciate ;
Who come to me for guide expert tow'rd
A half-sung trend of tones, unfinish of notes
You sneer a slur to, ere depart with dream
More or less disillusionized : man's music
Shown more sophisticated (cat-bird ; robin —
Mark both !) so better satisfying ! Friend,
I see a fall of the face in you, not all
Due to my voluble impertinence
But some to the songs (an oven-bird : loud, loud !)
You hear, perhaps, for the first time. Your own voice —

EARLIER POEMS

I like it well — would satisfy you more.
Not that I deem you ever would deny
(Yon crow caws meaningly) a musical
Value in least to this wild symphony
You'd fain stop ears at, while below my breath —
Thus to make sure you miss no worst of us —
I garrulously (the oriole repeats !)
Extemporize. These ritornelles, roulades
(Nay, listen the bubbling goldfinch !) liquidly
Lifted aquiver in tremulous air, were worth
Elaboration or analysis
With much among the lyricLaughs of men ?
And yet (that yellowhammer 't is that squeals)
Not musically satisfying, should
Music be measured by mere complexity,
A less and more sheerly, of bird's to man's !
To me, forsooth, there seems an interest
Nerve-occupying as with an increment
Of complication — though the practice wants
Comparatively in variety
Of juxtapositions possible betwixt
The variables, so is *per se* simplex —

AN ORNITHOLOGIST

In the junction, human practice is not chain'd-to,
Of timbre-change each with a pitch-change, sith the
bird —

No two alike, maybe ; yet all, in sort —
Alters the tang too with each rise or fall
Of the scale — 't is quaint, 't is taking ! Yet indeed
I blame you not ; I, rather, were the first
(Appreciating Brahms, Dvořák or Grieg
In terms above those trailing geese at squawk
High in the blue, north-streaming over the sun !)
To forswear scarce-articulate ecstacies —
It pricks me at the heart to spoil them, though ! —
Fit for the forests, haply, but for man
Childish as chuckle of that chickadee :
Not but that there 's some manhood in a child ! —
Yet, hark ! a song-sparrow ; of all souls of spring
The very quick quintessence ! — Feel you, sir,
No soul in music, an overunity
Ne'er-so complex'd ; no personal infinite
Or man's or bird's equally live and free ?
A self still self-express'd — even as mine
Tormenting yours — a truth, nor more nor less

EARLIER POEMS

But absolute-like each personal containment,
Or bird's or man's ; if only made mine-own ?
A self, though less by the bird elaborate
In cosmic-couch'd projection, just thereby
Serving comparison for base, for a mordant
Of Wagner's tones as subtler than yon jay's :
A self conspicuous, if by dint of foiling
The piteous bird-inadequacy more,
In bird as man ! And, though you hear for same
Within the type of the species many songs
Enough unlike to him who hearkens them,
Yet how diverse these species which approve
The world-soul ! With what utmost piquancy —
As not in men whose much similitude
Of caution and conservatism cultured
Leads ear to expect the soul-identity ! —
Of pure self-utterance 'mid these radiant dews
And mildmist-manners of the sun salutant
Here o'er the low ground, with all upper air
At tremble, vibrant : world-enthusiasm
Of a birdness ! (Hush ! My bobolink again !)

AN ASTRONOMER

I LIFT mine eyes unto the stars whence cometh
Help to the judgment of an universe,
Unto the stars ; and find their piercing sight—
So crisp, so shimmering-keen of this night-frost ! —
My light as theirs : and mine the estimate. —
Long have I known and taught that what we call
Copernican of divers vortices
And various orbits quite doth supersede
The Ptolemaic of the vaulted spheres
Arch'd over earth for fulcrum ; long have taught,
Yet never till this solitary hour
Guess'd the true contrast nor conceived the law
That regulates and reconciles both schemes
Of Ptolemy as of Copernicus
To one soul-systeming. The hour — this calm,
Crystalline, steel-clamp'd, deep, mid-winter night ;
The place and occupation — this untamed,
Invigorating wilderness wherein
I tread untrodden paths and track the world
As the first maker though the way be worn ;

EARLIER POEMS

The hour, the place and occupation all
Conduce to clarification ; where this light
Of star on snow-crust yields me estimate
Of crust or star. I centre here alone
Earth and the sundry spheres alike, by feeling
Intensely so these vortices of sight ;
Am Ptolemaic or Copernican
By rich admission of the counter-scheme
Appropriately. Hitherto I clave
To the one, condemn'd the other. Now I cherish
Both equally ; who first have found right place
For either. — Is it, I have but just become
Under the inspiration of this frost
And star-shine such philosopher, as erst
I would not be ; transcending, after years,
The unsoul'd star-science ; by heart-estimating
Star-shine, establishing truth's over-fact ?
How long I had taught, old Ptolemy were crude,
First-felt confusion ; and Copernicus
(Or call it Kepler, who may heed the name ?)
A realization and interpreting
Of the fact in absolute fact-evidence,

AN ASTRONOMER

Sense-proven logic ! Such in sooth they are,
I allow it yet, if sheerly outward fact
Be all the evidence ; nor the estimate,
Judgment itself, the sense to feel the fact,
Be equal evidence ! How deep I had felt
The dignity and grandeur of the change
From the old-supposed, self-centralizing man,
False pivot of the sun and stars and skies,
To the mere man-item ! Now and suddenly
I avow this very dignity for warrant
Of proper pride, a self-respect achieved
Beyond fact-deprecation ; pride wherethrough
Alone this universe of self-neglect
Can take its ground. In faith, the change were then
A dignity and grandeur past compare
(An overmanhood yet within the man)
If thus interpreted ; though otherwise
True, only were the spirit measured quite
By lore too crude to comprehend the least
Self-continence of mutual nebulæ !
If ancient Ptolemy (Hipparchus' heir,
Eudoxus' scholar) did but mistranslate

EARLIER POEMS

Philosophy to fields mechanical,
By the confusion undemark'd subverting
Both disciplines to error; none the less
Did this Copernicus construct a scheme
Of crude mechanics which we sycophants
Have half-mistook for full philosophy.
On, then, from both.— And sith these stars and moons
Are utterly indifferent to my mass
Save as I am of these a particle
Thrusting infinitesimally (yet
The more by virtue of such partnership
And insignificance, significant
As centre-pivot, focus, fulcrum of
All facts experienced), so even each least
Crystal and ray-diffusing molecule
Of star-stuff estimates, conglomerately
Systematizes in the mutualism
Of apprehension inly registrate,
An universe each of the farthest spheres
And some self-focus. — Thus I lift mine eyes
Unto the stars whence ever cometh help.

THE DIVORCED

THEY say that you despised me, cheated me,
Wrong'd me, a wife forsaken and forlorn.—
I doubt not one sad word of all they say.
Whence, sith the souls of many among men
Were shock'd beyond composure should I yield
To crime condonable and pardon you ;
Whence, for the precedent of public shame,
I brought a cause against you, made my plea,
Proved the avow'd and obvious wrong ; so stand
Clear'd of complicity ; redress'd : divorced !—
Thus much for sop to custom ; in cold eyes
Convention'd with the vision of the courts
I hold me reinstated, rectified.
Such for their world of righteous wrath ! — For you ?

How might I judge you ? I, who, in default
Of infinite intuition, fail'd response
Where marriage most were inward unioning ?
Who lack'd of filling up that life of love
Spiritual, inmost, your life needed most

EARLIER POEMS

Where least I rose to rendering it : your want
Passionate, intellectual, ah ! god-like,
For commune ultimate, your soul with mine,
In beauty of a deep-dream'd philosophy ?
How I aspired to meet you, yearn with you,
In you and through you unto those sky-depths,
Forsooth, forever hidden from my ken !
How I aspired ! Yet could but half-discern
Chill-chisell'd speculation, outlines cold
Of marbled ideality ; not feel
Your quick, organic cosmos, realize
Self-consciousness alive, complete, impassion'd,
Art-whole in worldship. — Oh : how I fell short ! —
Friends (I have made such moan to) have rejoin'd :
“ Yours the domestic, concrete, vivid love
Of home and hearth and womanhood humane,
The real, the Christian, the complete. His vague,
Abstract, dim, universalistic boast
Of pagan self-dependence leads, we know
And you know — be it your consoling ! — leads
By its own mystic emptiness to just
Such isolation, aberration, crime !

THE DIVORCED

Comfort yourself that yours is not the crime ! ”

Friends, I have made my moan to, thus reply
With well-meant mockery. My crime 't is to fail
Response where your love led me noblest.

Yours was the limitless capacity,
I ween, for leading, drawing up and on
(Ah, could I have made the potency practical !)

Of hearth and home and womanhood humane
To humane inspiration, love complete,
Concrete, compassion'd most by widening out,
Deepening down, transfusing commonplace
Sentiment with a world-morality :

Christ's meaning in the marriage of two souls.
And I could not be led, nor make to mount
Your wise way — and the breathlessness was mine !
Nor, that your faithlessness in falling short
Of such philosophy's full working shows
(However vile the fall, still equal-vile
In the sight of each — as your confession proves)
A flaw in the lute, a passion gone astray
Unfunction'd yet in personality
(Conscience organic of a moralism) —

EARLIER POEMS

'T is little ! 'T is but point within your plea,
Incomprehensible to both of us,
Of our miscomprehensions ; yields no rod
To wrathlessness ; nor any right to judge you. —
I, whose own weakness wears the front of yours,
By falling short of absolute matrimony
(My failure's depth proven in your depth of fall)
Forced your philosophy to fail — like vice !

Dear, I rise now to heights intuitive —
Too late — of intimate philosophy
Unguess'd before ; feel passionate consciousness
Of our soul-unity when parted most !
I have indeed contested suit to prove
Precedents in a world unready yet
To forego righteous wrath ; whose righteous wrath
Were wrong'd by less insistence. Though, for you,
The fault is felt mine from the first. And loss
Of opportunity to rectify
By reparation is my cross to bear. —
Cross ? 'T is soul-fate, self-fate unto us two ;
Not punishment sprung of the cold, dead law !

THE DIVORCED

**Quick fate stands immanent already ; lives
Through inmost overcoming in my love ! —**

But — for our two sad life-times sinn'd away !

A CANDIDATE FOR COMMITTAL

AM I the man who thinks too much, whom dreams
Have driven now to uttermost disgrace,
Save for this kind certificate you 'll sign
Soon as the skill'd examination 's done ?
Certainly this is I ; as you are he
I used to know so well in student-days ;
We two whose works diversified so wide
Only to bring us face to face at last
Here, and as now ! Old friend, I grasp your hand !
Strange, I am cheerful, strong and quite sane now
At sight of your keen, psychologic smile
Working me wonders.— Sure, a strange mischance
To come quite sane of a sudden ; when they say
"T is but mine obvious insanity
Saves me from ball and chain and bitter bread !
And you, the testimonial expert
Of mine insanity, who turn me sane ! —
Nay, do not interrupt me while I talk !

Let not your friendship fear to find me sane,

A CANDIDATE FOR COMMITTAL

Friend ! For what can I care ? Such plea of mine
Was nothing of my making. I rejoice,
Now for the first time, that you scientists
Know no compassion. (We philosophers
Are all compassion to the fingers' ends !)
Mine were the crimes, I grant, of overgreat
Compassion ; charitable largess of
Wealth not mine own ; misuse of misers' names
To play the god with !— Why excuse my crimes ?
I claim no least exemption. I am sane.—
Let us but feel friends'-confidence once more
Despite the dismal years of difference
And wordy warfare : science on your side ;
Philosophy on mine who sought to prove
No gulf irreconcilable between us ;
Only a partial, preassumed, abstract
Finitude for the flaw of your idea,
Resolved and overcome and reconciled
Even in the concrete unioning of mine,
My principle of infinite, functional
Godship determining a self-universe !
'T is ne'er philosophy that drives one mad ;

EARLIER POEMS

'T is falling short from full belief in it
To transcend contradiction, reconcile
World-lonely love beyond world-agony,
Include insanity and make it sane.
I was not firm philosopher enough
To find divinity through worst of dearth ;
I was not strong to bear the vast idea
Alone, unaided of your friendliness.
Then too the combat and the bitter words ;
A world for arbiter betwixt us twain,
Station'd between to separate ; when heart
And brain as one — that friendship felt for you,
One with the fresh philosophy I loved —
Cried out how we were reconciled from first
Could you but feel for me, but of me learn !
That was the agony : to combat so
When combat turn'd both truths into a lie ! —
You 'd rest in finitude for final fact,
Accept self-isolation undismay'd ;
Soar not to loneliness, love's infinite
Conscience of isolation ? Friend, my soul
Needs reconcile its loneliness or cease ! —

A CANDIDATE FOR COMMITTAL

Now 't is but cure for such-like suffering,
My terrible loneliness of brain and blood,
To feel again your presence, know your gaze :
That gaze which burn'd-through every page you wrote ;
Explain as now, mind-intimate at last,
Finally friend in friend ! — I go to face
Judge, jury, all the court-room wide agape
To hush huge laughter at the mumbling, marr'd
Old man of many marvellous lunacies ;
Face them nor fear them, fill'd to a firmness now
With health and sanity of thought once more
(Love's outlook of a mutuality) ;
To front and bear the brunt of what may come,
Disgrace if needs be, misery welcome now
With such a consciousness of you beyond !

Only — your smile is wearing threadbare, friend.
Have scientists compassion after all ? —
Only : be sure you stand not far from me
There in the court ; that I may touch your hand,
Feel friends'-blood tingle, see your face in the flesh,
Lest I go mad once more and scare them there.

EARLIER POEMS

Forsooth, I am an old and lonely man,
Worn-out with too much thinking ; and my dreams
 Crowd on me once again. You 'll come with me
 Now into court and sit beside me there
 While I show judge and them how sane I am,
 Braced by the bearing of a man like you ! —
 Truly, a fondly-featured meeting, friend,
 That brings disgrace in the end on one like me,
 Disgrace of too great sudden sanity
 For a soul worn-out with wrangling. Do we come ?
 The examination 's over ? Though I 've told
 Not one word yet of how, when I was mad
 With loneliness — but that is gone-by now —
 How world-compassion — but I weep, it seems !
 Come, friend ! — That paper in your hand, I trust,
 Holds all I 've told you ? Your psychology
 Will profit much by just my case in point
 Of how a frail philosopher went mad
 For loneliness of too strange thinking ; fell
 Sane again of a sudden —
 Ha ! not leave
 Me here alone with these who hold me here !

A CANDIDATE FOR COMMITTAL

Never alone, friend ! I 'll be with you still ! —
Ha ! he is gone ? And I 'm not there to tell
The court how sane I am ?

Men : am I mad ?

THE CONVALESCENT

LO ! 't is the earliest glimmering of dawn ! —
I wake ; and grow, even with the growing day. —

The names of flowers told unceasingly
In fragrant, fresh reiteration ; the green,
Cool and delicious energies of earth
One by one conjured up and one by one
Brooded, made vivid and adored. Nay, first
Ere these, the names of all earth's atmosphere's
Mighty emotions ; thunders, clouds, the winds
Out of the east, north, west and south ; all aspects
Of sun and storm, earth's weathering. The mountains
And ocean-depths, earth's multiplicities
Are told. — And with the telling, tone by tone,
Comes health back ; finds the soul a sympathy
Of insight and a strengthening by strength
Of the primal health and lustihood of earth.
Ay, and as strength in the contemplating
Springs gradual, grows a sympathy again
For reptile, bird and brute in heartiness .

THE CONVALESCENT

Each living out the loftier life than earth's,
Grasp'd by the soul at each ascent, each pulse
Of the life-renascence. And to childhood last
Its innocent, fair, fresh humanity
Grows the expanding insight ; and I dream
Of all ingenuous childnesses, all young,
Whole-hearted, white expectancies. And shall
Doubtless anew learn sympathy with men
And women, learn responsibility
Now long precluded ? — Softly : 'tis not yet.
I have been shut from mixture with my world.
I have been very low 'twixt life and death.
I learn life slowly ; must learn thoroughly
The lowlier and the lost ere, once again,
Maturity and whole humanity —
Achieved at last as never felt before !
For a fine fancy fills me how such lost
And lowlier life-aspects teach and show,
In manner to the need most suitable,
The loftier energy : how life and health
Now learn to absorb, evalue for the first time
A wealth, a richness hitherto ignored ;

EARLIER POEMS

Transcend indeed by vividly realizing
Each item long since relegate, nigh-scorn'd,
Out of life : life then emptiest, lacking quite
Childness and animal insistency,
Plant-passion, ambience of atmosphere.

Thus, for the nonce while here ensconced I lie
'Mid glimmering walls, to learn and never lose
Health's wild-world richness ; nor let slip the chance
(Ere health's responsibilities obscure)
To broaden out with daylight's pyramid
Earth-based, not apex-balanced. Sooth, the plant
Seems explicable (to this twilight mood
At least of half-health) but by lust of earth
And lift of atmosphere, by sun and rain;
A focusship and spherehood known and felt
Best in the primal postulate of loam.
Sure, and the sun and storm, the lust and lift
Were known and comprehended mainly by
Some lowlier, weaker lust and lift supposed,
Assumed subservient; geogonic births
Themselves unmediable, taken on trust !

THE CONVALESCENT

Yes, and what symbol of an atmosphere,
Of element-emotion, each the least
Or greatest of soul's vegetations ! Lo !
Naked, up-piercing shafts that mean the sun
'Mid thicket-strugglers ; or the verdure-clothed,
Squat staff which, basking unimpeded, means
The sun too : each, a consciousness of need
For sunshine in a various phase and place.
And rain ? Intended by each succulent cell
Of close-oozed tissue ; whether netted wide
'Twixt strong, rib-trussing veins, else laid along
Bladewise ; sluice-succulent through every shape,
Sensible, sympathied of sun and rain ;
Mingling and melting updrawn energies
Of loam with immanence of atmosphere—
A vegetative physiology
Indeed by adaptation, unioning
Of elemental chemistries — so known,
So felt and so made flesh of the flesh of me,
Parcel, participation in mine health,
Basal of pyramid as ne'er before —
By convalescence, growth in health along

EARLIER POEMS

With earth's less-growths; from stage to stage, mine
earth!

And for the intermediate animal,
The self-adaptive not alone to sun
And rain, to loam and atmosphere, but yet
To vegetation-immanence as well,
To growth of the succulent stem and spreading branch
Transcended as by an internality
More mark'd, an elemental structure less
Unmediate — an inherence none the less
Still elemental as still vegetative;
The animal-intense so understood
By synthesis of element-through-plant,
Of plant-through-element inversively:
Made animate by the reconciling. Thus
My health grows, shall be builded bit by bit
Of the intermediate richness, tier by tier
Crowning the undergrowth and proven mine
But by the structural basing solidly,
The convalescence with the untamed-intense
So gain'd and grasp'd for explanation of
The old, lost childlessness — of childness reach'd

THE CONVALESCENT

By reapproach, by growth up from beneath
Gradual, so appreciative, real.
Yes, at a stroke, one fire of fever, fell
The towered of mine emptiness, my spirit
Struck down beneath even those earth-elements
Unseen before for substantive, essential
To any soul, true union through a world ! —
Struck down if for this saving benefit
Of gradual recuperation — now
An element, now planthood, now crude brute ;
And now, contemplative, the undismay'd
Expectancy of childness, richliest fill'd
Just by the convalescence ; stoutliest based
In the learning (point by point of soul's past peril)
Of the deathward-tottering in vacancy ;
A tottering now impossible for nerves
Tension'd and strenuous, no doubt, yet whole
By conscious earth-inclusion, by the feel
Of less-things reconciled, vicariously
Aye to be cared for.

Shall the workless child,
Contemplative, the mere analysis

EARLIER POEMS

Or synthesis, the science sheerly, stay
My soul from full recuperation, strong
In ripe capitulating, strength by strength,
Of man's own world-responsibilities ?
No; no. The apex of the pile o'er-peers,
Caps and concludes the geometric mass
Of all ; is by its height not peak alone
But pyramid made perfect in the peak,
Made pyramid of tier and tier best by
The consummation, most self-realizing
By ultimate angulation of the height
For height's sake, therefore for the pile beneath.
Were element but nebulosity ?
Were plant but heterogeneities
Of sun and rain, of loam and atmosphere
Or any sum, agglomeration of these ?
Were the live beast a mere collective coil
Of vegetative functions cellularly
Carcass-like, irrespective of the brute-zeal
Different in kind, in quality from plant
As plant from loam — distinction absolute,
If but by the relativity involved ?

THE CONVALESCENT

Were child quite explicable (nay, defined
In truth), were I, this sicklihood, made plain
To health, as some amalgamative group
(Whence, then, the novelty, the need for proof ?)
Of animal physiologies ? Were man
Of world-responsibility but childness
With childness iterated till mere stress
Of multiple childnesses exhaust his soul ?
And though child, brute, plant, earth were each in sort
Responsible, total ; yet for the full man
(As for the child, brute, plant toward less-things each)
Remains the child's, brute's, plant's inadequacy —
A problem — by their difference in kind.
No synthesis of merely elements
Were plant, no synthesis of brutes were child ;
Nor shall mere synthesis of childhoods grow
(Mere duplications of this flaccid pulse)
My manhood and responsibility,
My self-initiative, vital blood !
The synthesis is more than synthesis,
An integration over and beyond ;
A qualification : as analysis

EARLIER POEMS

Deintegrates, annihilates beside. —
No sentience solely, but an actual zeal,
Passion of overunion, consciousness
Of mutual meaning in the childness now
Of contemplation ! And my soul at last
Shall realize, appreciate best by
Synthetic cosmos-creativities
This patient mediation ; working best
In and through past and lost, planthood and child
By being best actively the strenuous man
Of analytic-sympathy, none less
High self-assertion, self-transforming all ! —

Though for the nonce (because breath flutteringly
Warns moderation and the lean hands clutch
Nerveless the light, and sudden sinkings qualm
The flush'd frame) first learn patiently the lesser
And lowlier, lay the tier-on-tier whereby
Alone were apex, apex ; health, I ween,
World-worthy ! Be the name of element,
Of wind, sun, rain and atmosphere, the title
Of planthoods told unceasingly ; that strength

THE CONVALESCENT

(Slowlier than morning on my four wan walls)

Grow gradual, strength by strength, up through ; ab-sorb,

Resolve by sympathy a nascent soul ! —

Wherefore anew the brooding ; vividly

The adoration convalescentwise.

THE BLOCKADER

SHADOWS of sea-birds circling ; swift-swept clouds
Whitely sun-steep'd ; flash of the showering wave
Aquiver and wonderful for emerald depth ;
Swish of the spray, soft, ice-like, keen as steel ;
And over all, through all, the streaming, strong,
Salt wind, broad-blown, vigorous with light,
Warm with the warmth of ocean, sun and sky,
Day after day out of the east and o'er
And on and never ceasing. And the ship,
Sole sentinel upon the weltering sea,
Heaving and settling, slow, majestical
To lift and fall of each next, ponderous surge —
Surges o'er-beetling, concaved ; one and one
Upbrimming huge beneath us, till compress'd,
Tense-smooth'd with foam thwart-lapsing to the trough,
Passes the power and onward, aft and aft,
One beyond one relapses distantly
Convex, elastic, liquid-turbulent,
Aleap for riddance of the weighty bulk,
Westward adown the gulf. And day by day

THE BLOCKADER

Sun, from the east burning above us, orbs
Archwise to westward ; while, between, the clouds
Swing hurrying shadows. Night by night the stars
Multiple, or the heaven-hung, mild moon
Through phase and phase, ever from east to west
Lift, tower and fall again : beneath, above,
One weltering and one processioning
Unendingly. And, amidst all, the ship
Sentinel, steadily lifting, falling ; swamp'd
In the trough, upthrust to the crown ; wash'd, deluged,
drown'd
To rear again with bows a cataract
Of torrent riddance, spume arinse in spouts
From scuppers, hawse-pipes ; daylong blister'd, burn'd
By fire above ; nightlong beneath the bland
Star-sparks assuaged or emberlike by moon
In soothness saturated — aye the same :
By pride-perversity unyieldingly,
A sentinel at stand in the shallow seas ! —
And I too, sentinel on steaming decks,
Stand spray'd and spumed upon ; burn'd black, or
blanch'd

EARLIER POEMS

In splendor of the night ; blown warm or chill ;
Shadow'd by cloud ; bescream'd by the swirling gull,
Circled by laboring pelican, by flock
Of swift shearwaters ; whisper'd by the swish
Of the foam, by whistling of the silvery flash
Call'd fish : stand I at solemn lift and fall
By pride-perversity unyieldingly
Ceaseless awatch over the shallow seas.
And by much watching, much contemplating
Of sun and sea and sky, with respite from
Conflict at quarters to keep brawn and brain
Keen for destruction and the cursed assault,
Widens the soul, to heed this stream of the wind,
Sense wash of the wave and orbit of the sky ;
Take permeation by sun, air and sea
Their onwardness ; and onwardness with theirs ;
Take disavowal of persistent stand
And pride-perversity unyieldingly :
Impatient, as with sea and sky and air,
Petulant of impertinent blockade.

I am mid-aged ; the liberality,

THE BLOCKADER

Launch'd late. From earliest youth conservatism
Of obsolete, stiff-bluff'd barbarity
Call'd bravery and martially esteem'd,
Has been mine ; in oblivion of the blood's
Insistent pulse, has cold obedience
To worn, old ways of masterful, hard men
Been mine — train'd strait in tactics of the schools
To do out duty, whosesoe'er the soul
(Though haply pinch'd and sordid, mean and cramp'd,
Yet ranking by commission beyond mine)
Assumes superiority for source
Of absolution as for dominance.
I'd be too strict; too much this ship's machine,
Too sage, perhaps, with awe traditional
Tempering the heart, blood-reverence for law,
Authority and hierarchy here
For recusance : so by the base default
From oath, from loyalty of personal pledge,
To bring disgrace, their yard-arm disrepute
On the young emancipation ! Yet the new
Intelligence absolves from ordinance
Of any aged, seaworthless shrift this soul

EARLIER POEMS

Staunch to weigh well the due of years to-come
Toward adequate self-consistency. I stand
Officer of the deck, drill-martinet
Of the schools, train'd product of the rule precise
Unflinching and immittigable : man
Made sheer machine (an the code's imperative
Suffice to blot, obliterate a soul ?) ;
Sentinel of a system, genus-type
And sign of mundane pride-perversity;
And must stand till some chance, spent shot dis-jar
The pinion, stanchion, whatnot which I am,
To rust and rest in the deep—while clanks and thumps
A sound steel in the socket ; and the ship
Still throbs a bloodless, sense-obliterate,
Dull grinding as the system still must front
World's onwardness, keep bows (meant to push o'er,
Swift with the wind and wave !) breast-on to the surge.
But, for the instant need, be soul's relief,
Respite in freedom of conceived revolt ! —
I am aware this figure of my speech
Is insufficient, pitifully prone
To misconstruction if the adequate whole

THE BLOCKADER

Be based on such projection. Heaven and earth
In any onwardness which is their own
(Our physics teaches) are at worst a loss,
At best a nigh-reiterant energy,
If progressive, ay, even as regressive,
Less adequately than man's mood demands
Or man exhibits ; civilization's swing
And sweep by far outstripping sun or sky,
Salt wind or ocean in their stale intent
All-too primordial, effete far worse
Than any slavishness of humankind :
Molecules, whose world-adequacy mark'd
Archaic eons of cosmogeny;
Which, since first, palæozoic protoplasm,
Have slunk ashamed (I credit them with shame
Too generously ?) save as evolving fresh
In each fresh, plasmic cell-stuff not themselves.
Yet is there somewhat splendid to the sense
In sweep of the sphere 'twixt sea's horizon-round
And sea's horizon-round, procession'd swarm
Sufficient for man's metaphor to fuse
Mine with the life which, ne'er so slave, at soul

EARLIER POEMS

Still liberally moves and onwardly
(If poised in orbit, yet criterial thus)
As such may, marvellously moulds each old
In new ascendancy unwearingly—
Petulant of impertinent blockade.
And man, who knowing onwardness yet waits
Wanton in sloth, is by the conscienced shame
Thus much the less akin to sky and sea.
Wherefore in sight of sky and sea I stand
For obsolescence and a worn-out way ;
For abnegator, irresponsible,
Absolved from conscience ; and yet none the less
Knowing the lordlier conquering that comes
By soul-inclusion and the lifting-on,
Not by the crushing-back. This wide insight,
This permeation through sun, sea and sky,
Lifts it not these in me by metaphor
To mighty onwardness inspiring all,
Beyond mere molecules' redundant drift
Of stale, primordial, atomic dearth ?
Stand I not here and now (a mere machine,
A martinet degenerate by test

THE BLOCKADER

Of modern liberation) yet by strength
Of confluence a soul, a spirit anew,
A liberation of an universe ?—
I free my soul-speech even from the cant
Of watch-word, technic of the dismal drill,
Cult of authority that, absolute
But by inconsequence and ignorance,
Now melts from mind as yonder drench of spume,
Sea's obsolete, old inefficiency
(Which served, maybe, to heed me of my soul)
Drips from the breast of the ship I fain would shake
Aloft for men to marvel at, a new
Signal of self-responsibility —
Ensign of absolute deliverance !
Yon admiral should startle from his sleep
Of savage dreams ; and in the desperate,
Sublime refusal sense this soul at last
Of the world and world's repugnance of command
Not based on a world-whole conscience : and man 's
best!—

Man's best! Can mutiny be meant by that?

EARLIER POEMS

Can world-whole conscience countenance a lie,
Countermand mandates if but primitive,
Yet preacknowledged to allegiance sworn ?
Desertion ?— Nay ! the duty first self-imposed
In voluntary self-abandonment,
Were prime of obligations as of rights !
If that the shackles thwart the truth at growth
(If I be wiser than formerly
And irk'd by dead-hand of the self that was),
Yet law is Soul for souls self-bound thereby
(And I continuously self the same,
Accountable to every earlier oath !).
And orders and authorities have place
For him, yon admiral, for these my crew
(He over me as I am over them)
Incapable, either, of self-governance else !
Nor mine the self-governance save soul include,
Contemplate, so subordinate, their zeal
For the wrong way of the world ; and work through
them
Not self-disgraced, but by a sage respect
For pledge and patience of the personal vow

THE BLOCKADER

In the sight of all ; by consequence of soul
True to the old, worn ways made obsolete
But wonderfully luring on, in law
Of absolution by the self-command —
Man out of molecule but by molecule still
At self-evolvement ! —

Sail ? A sail ? Escaped
The slipperier while I 'd speculate : blind, blind
Through conscience' utmost clarity ? —
“ Give chase !
Solid shot ! ” Ho ! She shall not break blockade !

THE PATROL

HUGE, phosphor-gleaming surges 'gainst the dim,
Wind-scurrying sands burst mountainous from out
Yon tumult, from yon blackening confront,
Out-tower and overpeer; to crash in ruin
With roar above the roaring of the gale
Froth'd on the spume-slant: an insatiate, vast,
Unsealike vagueness and a chaos made
Of unbeginning, unreturning waste
Where once was water. And o'erhead the clouds
Low, swift as swept smoke, dun and dusk rack on
Coast-long: a merging of beach both and surge
To nought. And, dank beneath the dunes, bleak lands,
Bog-like and naked of all trees, shake, shiver
In flat-blown sheet of sedge-blades, lowering, hoar
As each gust greater than the last lays low
Their crush'd and cowering stem-cells. And, save sedge
So shrouded this land's nakedness, were earth
Engulf'd, long since blown wide, else swallow'd by
These surf-gulps. And this desolation seems
A terrible and tragic reckoning,

THE PATROL

Quintessence and a focuss'd figurehood
Of world's stark orphanage : how only cloud
Insensible and gale unmeaning, by
Effort to wipe out land or sea alike
To indiscernibility, are given
For reconciling's stead ; and mockingly
(For union of a living sea and land)
In irony bewilder this wild beach
With sifting aye and sifting, bolting o'er
Unalterably all these myriad sands
Sans place or order. I alone of the night
Seem life, seem order-borne : yet mockingly
Lost in mine effort to be guardian
Of sea or land ; seem utterly like gale
Or surge or cloud-rack or these withering blades,
An irony and chaos. I, like light
Before the world-creation, am nor man
Nor earth nor waters which be over earth
Nor beneath earth : the demarcation stopp'd
And world run backward till before the light
Came or the waters were beneath, above,
Here, yon nor anywhere. And I, alone,

EARLIER POEMS

Unaided fall to chaos and am spent
By soul's exhaustion. Here on the sands I sink
But to be buried, sifted ten times o'er
With scurrying silt-storms ; and am miserably
Perishing for this orphanage, this world
Orderless, godless, uncreated, nought ;
The iteration and reiterance
Ended — no way, no cyclic forth-and-turn
Of sane patrol ; but one insanity
Of unreturning, wherefore unadvanced,
Stiff stationship : patrol's obliteration.—
What were this order, God, creation ? Whence
Its nothingness proved of the night and rack ?
Here in the chill exhaustion someway life
Shows novel — as the pulse-beats weaken, leaps
A fresh interpretation ! All is lost :
World ended. Build I in the death anew
A world ; create, order and aye uphold
A true patrolship ; am first realizing
An absolute guardship which itself shall prove
Sea, strand or land, cloud or the gale, one truth
Of genuine inexhaustion ; self-support

THE PATROL

Unending, infinite-cycled ; even by being
Returnless, unbeginning ! — Lo ! I lie
Drooping to death ; soaring to light alive !

This orphanage, this chaos and this stop
Supposed, by no beginning and no God !
'T is proven. And this gale is all that was
From first ; no first else ; nay, no first defined.
This is the worldhood : chaos, nothingness
In all times terminant, an unremittent,
Inexorable, absolute blockade
To any journeying ; the mere machine
Proved mere machine, hence utterly run-down.
E'en though the day to-come may constantly
Succeed night ; sunshine and the fecund spread
Of earth confronting ocean's moisture-breath
For marriage-procreation be the bourne
Of every storm-rack ; though creation come
To severate the waters constantly ;
Yet is the demarcation now wiped out.
This moment no polarity of earth
To ocean and no unioning of light

EARLIER POEMS

Are mine. But instantly is God deposed —
Creation, order, law defunctionate
To orphanage. And I, incapable
Of guardianship, am no man ; never was
Nor could be creature of an order'd scheme,
Patrol of this lost boundary ; but am not ;
Even as this emptiness I deem'd an use
Of ocean-sperm and land-fertility
Swoons storm-obliterate. — The chaos swarms ;
The rack sweeps on and over nothingness !—
Though is the vast suggestion mystic-borne
In on the swooning spirit ; how, in last
Extremity, most isolate unuse
And worthlessness of creature that I was
(Sunk then in sand-storms, shrivelling away
To spume-shrunk indiscernibility
World-like), how yet this deadweight which I am
Sums up and comprehends as ne'er before
This tragedy, this elemental loss
Now first perceived, now known a tragedy ;
Whence personally vital, valuable
And genuine as can be no creation,

THE PATROL

No order'd iterance : self-processive ; ay,
Appreciates, realizes in this doom
Of earth, air, ocean and the nought of things
Someway a worldhood, a sufficiency
Of self-assumption — were it earth's, air's, ocean's ?
An ordering, creation, nay, an end ?
Or, in default of each and all of these
(These unit-portions of the spent machine
Proved zero ; every unit yielding place
To a total, infinitesimally whole,
Self-individual uniqueness), rather
A somewhat in whose desolation felt
Of self (self-conscienced emptiness) is found
No use, indeed, nor order, no patrol
Of forth-and-turn and turn-again ; but value
Of estimation, poise and focussup
Ensphering, self-use — beauty — which can need
No purpose and no sanction, yet nor God
Beyond the autovital, through and through
Uniquely self-establish'd ; each in pause
Eternal but by being incessantly,
Interminably fluxion'd ?— Can the strength

EARLIER POEMS

Of this corporeal tragedy rear up
My bodily presence over and beyond
This battling, baffling of the terrible gale
To re-exertion in self-exercise
Of adequate inexhaustion, making way
Where no way was : ah ! guardian utterly
Of overwhelming tempest ? Through this storm
I stretch abroad, brooding as light before
Creation. And am chaos, rack ; am world !

This, then, is godship ; this, the cause, supposed
Abandon'd ; this, the guardianship, patrol
Of earth and ocean — on this swept sand-beach
To swoon ! Thus in the estimated loss,
The conscious sacrifice extinguishing
The bodily progress and the finite zeal,
Springs space-transcendence ! In the storm first find
Ocean and earth the ocean-difference
From earth by self-abandonment of all
Distinctive feature ! And the paradox
Makes of my burial, my perishing,
A perseverance. Can this strange truth be ? —

THE PATROL

Someway these limbs bestir. A tingling steals
Through flesh and marrow; that the beat of
brain
Pulses the blood at heart; that now I lift
Body erect and stand upon these feet
For forward progress: thus; and thus. I move;
Resume patrolship. And yon eastward rift
Augurs a storm-subsidence and the dawn!
Lo! was the truth but paradox; my dream
A quietism: how that the world might run
Back from accomplishment; assuredly
That pause could be of any purposive
Use and advancement, maintenance or end?
Have I been drunk with derogation from
Ripe humanhood, become as untaught babe
In birth-approximation of this numb
Death-swooning? And am now by blood's revolt
Revitalized, re-masking at this dawn's
Storm-respite to soul-husks not quite slough'd-off
Of orderly patrol, the turn-again
Aye and return through number'd, finite shifts
Of the demarcation of a land from sea,

EARLIER POEMS

Maintenance of a severance, a beach
Created ; to God's worn creatorship,
Establishment as of mechanic world
And man, each insufficient to maintain
Self or the other, save if by recourse
To authority and preëstablish'd scheme
Inexplicable, being *ex machina* ?
Can soul forswear soul's death-experience ;
Born again (nay, now first well-born !) be still
Unautogenerate, unsophisticate
Creature of order and a selfless God
Supposed : but in that agony supreme
Outlived, drown'd down — not rehabilitable ?
Sooth, 'twas a supreme sanity, insane
(Here I take up obliterated lines
With firmness fresh of foot and strength of limb)
By stress of concentration : world and God
Focuss'd so microcosmic as to seem
Nought but my bodily swooning ; now recharged
With wide vitality ; none less ensphered
By mine expansive, unimprison'd soul —
God and the world a godship and a world

THE PATROL

Made over new (these footmarks on the sand
Are a new path cut out, untrod before
And unretractable — mine, yet these sands'
Which hitherto were sands', not mine ; which in
That swooning were made mine, not then these
sands' !)

And I a cosmic soul, a spirit of earth,
Air, ocean and this ocean-beach : as these
Are soul too ; each, some focus of me here
In comprehension : world-in-me, the God ! —

Lo ! dawn ; whose orderly returning streams
No iteration of created light
Spawn'd upon chaos ; but whose after-storm
Is a re-birth of this my tempest and
This self-same tempest of earth, sky and sea ;
Divine and needing no establishment ;
Unique ; unknown before ; criterion
Of all-time ; by world's very orphanage
A self-sustainment, ordering afresh
The demarcations ; morning's after-night !
Lo ! how the tempest calms itself ; sea, sky

EARLIER POEMS

And land acquire, now first, distinctiewise
Their intercourse, their organism. My spirit
Guardeth a worldhood ; ceaseless, unbegun
And unreturning proveth aye patrol !

A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RESERVING my best answer till the end:—

Friend, I am glad of opportunity
(Returning thanks for gratulation given)
Now on attainment of my good degree
To offer explanation womanwise
Of woman's aim ; how, modern yet madonna,
We nowise for the man's-acquirement
Doff femininity ; but far the more
Attain the real, ideal womanhood.
For justification seems essential here
(If not in your eyes, yet required of mine)
Of me who undertake, more ways than one,
To be the equal helpmate of a man.
And, in so setting forth apology
For manlier womanhood, I gladly greet
Manhood that learns to read doubly aright,
Can comprehend the womanly in man.—
This, in appreciation of that work
Of ethic grace, more woman's gift than man's,

EARLIER POEMS

Which my philosophy so well approves,
My womanhood shall aid you carry on.—
Modern : madonna? Can the sweet, old faith
In innocence, in household holiness
Abide sophistication of our times?
Woman, the wise, be woman any more?
Can girlhood —‘grace, the glad simplicity
Of young, ingenuous heavenliness’ —survive
Strict application of equality
With standards of a strenuous competition,
World’s sweat-and-blood contention man with man?
Ay ; and in thus surviving best transfuse
The mundane manhood, make world’s wealth and health
Heavenly-feminine, an whole humane!—

First, for the trivial accessories
Of garb and guise of speech, I would not urge
Man-modes or manners. By some hours of contact
With maids too mannish in their cloth and cut
Of talk, I reach conclusion that such scouts
Sent in reconnaissance advanced of the guard
Are simply spies to bring back tales of the camp

A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Its orientation, outlook, walls, redoubts
Merely, not privy to the commander's mind
Of either side, not serviced of the staff
Fit to interpret information filch'd.
These are the sexless who—scarce maid, scarce man—
Lose lovability of femininethood
Nor gain the compensation of man-insight
Into proportions, dignities of things.
Them I pass over; though admit the garb
Man-modish of presumptive usefulness
When, yielding to demands of deftness, maids
May yet not cast aside maid-modesty
By too conspicuous precociousness —
In time, when men's own minds learn to combine
Propriety with the freedom, not as now
Through long association needs suspect
A laxness with the unconvention'd style.
And also I'd admit the maid, if frank,
Were then more sure of speech to countervail
Men's coarseness, want of courtesy; to teach
In practising a sober chivalry
Of man's-to-woman, woman's-speech-to-man

EARLIER POEMS

Direct, distinct, yet sympathetic; mellow'd
Not by superfluous gallantry, but open
Admission of a mutual reverence.—
These things will with the culture of the times
Ripen, the outward rind of seed within.
'T is the intention, quality attain'd
Of spiritual richness, which makes well or ill
The maidliness or manliness of mode ;
Interpretation yet dependent on
Environment, mind-habit man's or maid's.

Which leads me to the kernel of my creed ;
Necessity that aught of great or good,
If to be instant good, not obsolete
Nor overwhelm'd, must — howsoever deep,
And all the more in virtue best of depth —
Must lift at level, ne'er below the brim,
Of the flood of life ; how world-environment
Such as the times have labor'd and brought forth
Affords criterion ; and but well or ill
(Though well-and-ill give meaning to the mean,
Value-directive to above-below ;

A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

And in such sense were moral-absolute !)
Is found above, below respectively
The best mean of attainment of the times
In the purpose and the practice pitch'd upon
By way of instance : marriage, humanhood.
That which were well in man, we 'd both agree,
When battle-ax meant wooing — the bloodshed's
Barbary — were barbarous but now
In the taste of now ; were best at that brute date.
The maid who sulk'd at spindle in her tower
Daylong, and nightlong wail'd her plight, were nought
To the purpose of perfection in our time —
Unless for a social gain by pity given,
A satisfaction that she wax not worse
In the nerves and need asylum for her pains !
And if in home-communion womanhood
Be not, all ways, full equal of the man
(Whate'er may prove a measure of attainment)
Is woman of necessity degraded
In the ultimate humanhood, the family.
Ay, and can family in wife degraded —
Motherhood proved inadequate to man —

EARLIER POEMS

Prosper in fatherhood left lone and mateless ;
Man find humanity, be human-whole
In union proved no partnership humane ? —
Thus it behoves to match the best in man
With woman-measure equal, measure meet
For the masculine attainment through the world
(Focuss'd and centred at the hearth of home ;
Without which, sex needs here no argument !)
In best and brightest. If that best be love
(Without which, home-community were nought —
As you nor I should anywise dispute !)
Behoves a close inquiry whether love —
Nought differing, as love, in either sex ;
Being union, if of infinite-diverse
For either, each-in-each identically —
Prosper by much sophistication, candor
Of intellectual determinism :
Whether a logick'd love be — Poetry !
And, if the intellectually complex
Be proved to prosper love in modern man,
Must woman, to attain full womanhood,
Acquire the characteristic modern mind. —

A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Friend, my philosophy has taught me much
(But you too know how love's entail'd of learning!)

Beneath the times' appearance. At the first
I nursed a skepticism juvenile
Anent cool wooings with much circumstance
Of pros and cons and welfare of the race.
Till, by some sight of wisdomless, rude worship
Call'd love — love once, when world stood at less
strength

Of stress — yet little beyond appetite
In carelessness for consequence to her
Beloved — for inability to comfort,
Protect; in lust-romantic selfishness
Scarce Love — it came upon me that the more
Of knowledge more the spiritual intent,
World-conscious content actual of the union
In the spirit-self call'd Love. If world be one
(One time-stream conscious of before-and-after,
With content ever-cumulant both ways),
Then is that oneness by diversity —
Obtain'd, ne'er by disparity 'twixt minds

EARLIER POEMS

Sex-married but rather, by a wealth in each
At acme of its own development
Contributive to the spirit-partnership—
More and more, more and more an unioning
In ripe reality concrete and true,
Most whole by most complexity. And man
Scientist, if but high philosopher
At heart (philosophy, the world-made-self
Of science), living lover cosmical !
Man loves not less by learning more and more ;
But more distinctly, more directly loves ;
Unioning in his love a world more rich,
More heaven-holy as more habitable
With every admonition of the brain.—
The old simplicity was worldhood once
When yet concrete, complex'd as world then knew ;
Not now. The innocent inadequacy
Precludes proportionate love-with-wisdom, leaves
Not godliness, not whole humanity.
Nought is in knowledge of the wide god-world
To cancel wonder, worship : more and more
Beauty made manifest the more love-known ;

A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Man, woman, known in mutual reverence.—
Whence, would I share the burden of the world,
The ‘glory and splendor and beauty’, firm in love,
Be fit for fostering of men to-come
And women of the future family,
Must we in family be, both alike,
(And wisdom means a culture of the highest,
A love-enraptured world-philosophy !)
Wisely in love — and else no love in fact :
I, only so, eternal womanhood.

Friend, by this intricate tediousness I take
A serious luxury in writing long,
Painstakingly in pure, supreme delight ;
Nor need excuse me to the poet-lover —
Feeling (scarce song in a love less adequate !)
Alone true poetry in logick’d love. —
Not that you want the argument ! Your prayer
Assumed the worth of the woman nobly sued,
After these years’ forbearance whilst I toil’d,
With gratulation of her task’s success !
But — for the justification of myself,

EARLIER POEMS

My woman's way unto my mind of a man ;
My woman's way which yieldingly says : 'Yes'.
How should a woman in these latter days —
Madonna but by a maid-modernity —
Want for the word to make of woman's world
Man's heaven, ope humanity to both ?
Thus, for this multitude of reasons (woman
Is woman more for reasoning rigidly,
Woman indeed worth man but by man-logic),
I repeat, 'Yes'. With reverence I deem
Myself shown worthy of an equal bond
With man, a mutual-freedom. I declare
Purpose to put to the proof my good degree
As wife and woman-fosterer of childhood
Worthy to serve, worthy to share and show
World-self-control. For that I know your love
(Knowledge comports with love, by all these
 proofs !),
I love you and will live with you, we twain
In world-sophistication made one soul.
Thus I accept the gratulation given
At the gratulation's test ; admit attainment

A DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**Formal of fitness for the modern life
Of loving logic, lovable counselhood.**

**Here in this letter little is of new,
But all sincere. In all sincerity —**

A HORTICULTURIST

‘GOOD growing-weather’ ? — Sir, I seldom find
Souls of a leisure that delights to lay
Ear to the growth of the ground and listen life’s
Slow, verdurous vegetating. Yet my life
Is lapp’d in leisure of a listening soul
(Leisure by verdurehood made busiest so) ;
One kind affinity for flowery facts
Their loves and likes and splendid prospering
In the sun here and the watering of the rain.
And, for the *gradus* of the yearly growth
Is generous and one annual orbit scarce
Distinct at large from annual orbits gone
Year by year, season after season, finds
My sympathy much space to enter in,
Enjoy and ponder-through the lives of these
In various, vegetative meanings ; mind
Of mine a source as of philosophy
Interpreting cell-science of our times
To a function’d monadism. And, for the years
Are years, is long-establish’d sympathy

A HORTICULTURIST

Sweet; and mine insight rooted, great and green.
That thus I seldom crave the human sort
Of sympathy ; and, while accepting yours
For a genuine godsend of discipleship
Such as you care to offer, I should maintain
Communion mathless satisfying, sir,
Here in the garden though you chose to go.—
Yet go not ! For the human comradeship
Exceeds the vegetative. And 't is solace
This once to parley in equality.
Of my speech, most must be to show you here
Humanity in plantship ; poetry
Of planthood that is in me. Though but the more
Is speech distinctive over and beyond
The plantship of our manhood. And in your air
I scent at any rate a verdurehood
Of young and vigorous insight ; and would speak
Where comprehension can accompany ;
Not, as too often, a derision, coarse
Or keen miscomprehension of my mood.—
Ay, there have been a many travelers here,
From fame of my fine flowers ; hardly one

EARLIER POEMS

Whose motive to admire them was mine.
There have been many minds to question mine
Concerning management, assistance given
To planthood-needs and hopes ; and many eyes
To feast on scarlet, azure, golden-pink,
Purple and passion of the great leaves' green ;
Yet hardly an heart intelligent to love. —
As for the crude, ill-educated sort
Who gape at the flame of the foot-wide petalling
Call'd poppy, stare the larkspur's azure blind ;
Fall-to with brush and pallet, paint my garden
For an arabesque mosaic ; go away
Cocksure that color is the crux of things —
Nor do I care, that they 'd admit space-form
If form be just their color's diagram ! —
I take small comfort from such artist-crumbs
Of human character. I quarrel not
With the canvas'd color-clots they carry off
To frame and feast on ; sooth, their color-plan
Is good as mine in the garden — or, if better,
Is better to their credit ! 'T is but their claim
Of ultimate intelligence, perception

A HORTICULTURIST

Of pure sensational impression, 'cause
Of all that's real in thought', that boils my blood !
If they could see how close to savagery
Their psychologic fallacy betrays them !
Could they but feel how the creed's consistency
Would carry them beneath intelligence
At all, down, down below the weeds of grass,
Clean beneath loam and rocks and dust ; how 'sense'
If sense alone, mere 'color-scheme', were quite
Incapable of any schematism :
'Felt color', color but by a value yielded
In each concatenating soul of us
(In their souls only less than in mine own !);
'Sense' therefore real but in sense' self-transcension
(If elementally as a manifold
Of photic combination, then the more
By meaning the flower-in-us, the leaf-in-us :
And this, regardless of a three or two
Dimensions in such language-of-the-eye !)—
If they could grasp this fair philosophizing—
Sure, they would pause in the painting, grow more
worthy

EARLIER POEMS

The wonder-beauty of the world they flout—
The world they not intentionally, indeed,
Though none the less inexorably, flout;
Deducing ‘consciousness’ from ‘spots’ and ‘points’
Spotless as pointless save interpreted
Language-like to a purport, at the last,
Of photic-couch’d enthusiasms of soul :
The soul inane unless by sympathy
Of insight universal, thus express’d !
Pity, that most of those who visit here
Dabbling in color, may not rest content
With insight yielded to the spots they paint ;
But still must half-explain it all away,
The planthood with our manhood’s sympathy
For the planthood in us. Oh, they still assert
Their objectivity (quite impossible
Sans object-insight!), still forswear their creed
By what their brush creates ; yet scarce explain
How a comprehension comes —themselves but spots,
Blotches of hue — can color comprehend ?—
So much for those half-cultured who ’d deny
The intellect that makes intelligent

A HORTICULTURIST

Even its degradation, their degree
Of stultification — let them paint and pry!
They paint fair pictures ; guess nor why nor how.—
Then there come others of the science-brood :
Psychologists not these, but physiologues
Who miss the meaning much as painters do ;
If yet, as by inversion, taking heed
Too much to the plant, too little to themselves,
Fail in the reconstruction equally,
Lacking analogies intuitive
Despite a parade and pomp and circumstance
Of an observation absolute supposed !
Yea, they are wearisome who lay such claim
To the final verdict, last exactitude
By chemical analysis of cells !
Ay, analyse back to a primal element —
One, mark you, not such four-score of their scheme —
The hypothetical sub-hydrogen
In quantitative self-complexities,
Or any ion, unit what 's-its-name,
For quintessential basis of their cells —
Explain you anything ; or, haply, state

EARLIER POEMS

Now first with nicety, exactitude
The problem life-philosophy's to solve? —
What of their tissuey nuclei? I grant
Great value in the evolutionary,
The functional comparisons of plant
And human organism though each express'd
In algebraic signs, atomic symbols
The simplest (so the most inadequate)
Of common terms — for a proper place and purpose
In tracing continuities throughout
And bases for the felt analogies
Of insight-sympathy so sub-defined;
Not for their purpose of reducing plant
And man alike to a cell-nonentity!
Prate of root-pressure, ferment, chlorophyll,
Capillary-absorption, permeation
Wholly accounted-for by mechanism,
Contiguance osmotic cell with cell!
Sir, what would all their cell-stuffs in the world
Be cells of, cells in fact, save cells-of-plants;
The plant explaining still the cell, as cell
Some least explains the molecule, as man

A HORTICULTURIST

Explains by modified analogy
(A modification based in knowledge of
The springs of action, function motivate)
In insight-sympathy the living plant.
For otherwise were every cell the same
Whate'er the chemic complex (chemistry
Itself indifferent, failing reference
To the over-planthood, over-humanhood
Criterial of the contrasts), plant with rock
Clean interchangeable, and man at best
Mechanical recorder, comprehending
Nor rock nor plant, nor the nature of himself —
Which, even by being the man-of-molecules,
Conceives and so demarks both plant and man
In terms both cellular-molecular
And vegetative-human none the less.
Cell-structure's nowise structural enough
(Though ne'er so chemic in the last resort!)
To render comprehensibly as tissue
The least elaborated thallogen! —
The chemic fallacy refutes itself
In terms of protoplasm — preassumed

EARLIER POEMS

An elementary material
Equipp'd with each and all plant's faculties
Supposed explain'd by reference thereto!—
Thus for the physiologues ; they 'd miss the mark
Of planthood by discovering too much ;
Rending and tearing till the plant lie dead :
Then edifying life with life's remains !
And, for the better botanists who class
And reclass by the manner of each frame's
Resemblance, theirs is mainly but to aid
(Save also, that they too teach relationships
Of stock to stock in outworn ancestries)
Memory's nomenclature, add to each
Familiar face an unforgotten name —
A worthy way ; but still beside the mark
Of best appreciation ; and yet an aid
To us who add a poetry to speech,
Vivify epithets, both name and know !

Remains the poet-knower, I or you
(With chemic erudition well-equipp'd
Toward managing, directing planthood-hopes

A HORTICULTURIST

Whose health-achievement, novelty-success
Sheer color advertises to the eye !),
Friend and befriended of the patient plants ;
A comprehension and intelligence
Beyond the plants', yet yielding planthood voice
Of humanhood.— Not as from human tongue,
The plant call'd human and endow'd with speech ;
No such crude, antiquated Grecianism,
Conventional inheritance of verse ;
But selfhood of the planthood felt in me,
Made vocal in the man, appreciator !—
Friend, I have spoken of myself to you,
Of the planthood in me ; making poetry
Of the mutualism. Friend, I pray you, throw
To ash-heap for the food (not flower and fruit)
Of life in you these sensuous-simple points
Of the colorist, these cells — save for their union
In the living whole ! Sing heart-philosophy
Of each through each, so sing my larkspurs loud
In the azureness and sap-fertility
Of rhythm, sonorous syllabiling of self !
Science and sentience, bad psychology

EARLIER POEMS

Are the poverty of intellect of those
Who pose for preachers of the modernism
(Of a color-gloating, of a clinic-garden
In gardenless disintegrance) and fain
Make idols of fact. — Friend, why not truth : like mine ?

THE PRIMA DONNA

AH, but I laugh that weary, happy laugh
Our Browning wrote of ; like his Herakles
After the labor and accomplishment —
Husband mine, after this my conquering
You quote me now, their outburst of applause !
' The great tones sung, in technic perfected ;
Authoritative ; satisfaction full ' !
Thus, I have gain'd mine art's acknowledgment ;
Can beg a respite, steal an hour for learning
To understand this art they rave about ;
Comprehend labor and victory — conquest new ? —
Friend, for what end the labor all these years ?
Is it that in me something wakes beyond,
Far beyond, in and through the conquest here ;
Some dim suspicion of a failure lurk'd
In all this worship loud and eminence ?
Failure, save understanding yield me aid,
End comprehended prove end earn'd and won ?
Ay, for 't is mainly they applaud the voice ;
The song but little, technic rated far

EARLIER POEMS

Above mere music meant in every note :
The strength superb and sinew'd mastery
Of the thews, their admiration ; not the aim —
Lion or hydra, death's self, overcome,
Appropriated, reconciled with life ?
Husband ! What if, before the morning wanes
To noon ; ere I rouse to the daily stint
Of sheer vocality (you, to music's work
Genius'd, creative) — ah ! what if we two
Couch'd happily over against this breakfast-hearth
Philosophize — nay, what if I hold-forth
From throne of pettiness preëminent,
Instruct the man of genius how my art —
Half-scorn'd, sir (nay, in heart !) by either of us ! —
How this my failure in my victory
Proves victory over failure by intent,
Means music ; ay, despite such shameless wrong
Done music in my master'd craftsmanship,
My plaudits that declass the genuine crown
Won, worn in spirit, husband, by your soul
(You listening patiently) — nor fear lest I
Catch hoarsening by the talk ! I could not sing

THE PRIMA DONNA

To-night, so stirr'd my heart is by this false
Tribute to technic of the dabblers there ;
Ne'er could I sing save some relief of talk
Intervene, free my soul from scorn of self
For failing (in interpreter's-attempt)
To obliterate the interpreter, efface
Technic in triumph of interpreting's
Transparency ; for triumphing as now
Diva and *brava*, what you will ! — Ah, husband !
Fancy his Herakles exhibiting
Muscles and sinews to the sleeking palm
Of pleased Admetos, purged Augean folk !
'T were Herakles' to question : ' Next, what task ? '

Yes, and what task, what end ? You know the end
Best in your brain ; somewhat, perchance, in the song
Conceived, composed of the manuscript. But see
you
(Your work has craft, but of a nobler kind !)
Song's meaning best in the masteries I mouth
By any virtue of their mastery ?
Nay ; in your heart, though half-articulate,

EARLIER POEMS

I dare discern a want: ‘This voice whose speech
Woman’s, divine (being my wife’s) must mean
(As I mean her soul by each song conceived)
My soul, must still intend to interpret me —
The husband, understood, made one by love.
Yet’ — there the half-articulation fades !
Friend, is it wife’s-love merely that should seize
And speak the soul ; subordinate the method
By worship in the music, every note ?
Or is it somewhat in you (ah ! in me !)
Deeper and holier that demands of me ? —
Well, then, for the mode your husband-love assumes
(Your genius’ self-disguise) which would support
These people in their tribute of applause :
‘True to the timbre’ ! — But — timbre’s criterion,
Is it some sensuous analysis
Of how tone in the abstract, tone as tone,
Mere tone must be, to be tone-beautiful ?
Is it, conviction springs in the concave vault
Of palate, passages to a nicety
Adjusted that the vibrant resonance
Assume just such a sort of resonance

THE PRIMA DONNA

As, entering in, tickles appropriately
To the ears' formation, fibre-sac and cell ?
So ; but are nerve and sac and fibre judge
Of sound's heart-fitness ; is the vibrant vault
Warrant of an art-value ? Dubiously ;
Being themselves, in their organic gust,
Not only life-subordinate but, even
A register of bygone ways ancestral
In taste one-time æsthetic but not now
Exemplary of our soul-onwardness —
An onwardness which form'd or sac or cell ;
And ever modifies despite the drag
And deadweight of their frame conservative,
Whose function chiefly were to keep us sane
And tame unto our sociality !
Whence, if the tone be bound to please the ear
Merely, must all life-satisfying lift
Of soul-conatus be denied to it,
And only that be art which ancestors
In some now-negligible infant-age
Of the earth conceived and earnestly put forth,
Maybe, but which to our maturity

EARLIER POEMS

Must prove but babbling. And the physic-tone
(Mere air-vibration, mark !) however order'd
(Be it ancestrally by structure-chance
Or by deliberate choice of men to-day)
To abstract, mathematic unities
Of ratios overtonic, what you will
Of arithmetical simplicities,
Can claim authority only if the soul
(A pretext which appeals to you nor me)
Should dwell in an indolence for sweetness' sake
And fain eschew a strenuous nobleness !
'T is well, to know whereby the bland be bland
Of structure; though to choose, for strength of
choice !—
Remains what ? Just this genius of you there
Filter'd and fritter'd someway through my voice
To ears and brains and souls agape of them :
No emptiest, aural yearning, no, nor sample
Authentic of the laboratory-tone,
But tone-expression — self alive for song !
Fancy his Herakles cutting out some thew,
Slashing and slicing sinews, muscles so

THE PRIMA DONNA

That each might be admired more overtwise,
Each obtain due share of the mob's remark,
Ere it undertake a fresh strain presently !
Where, then, were muscle, sinew for the work ?
Nay, he knew well each muscle's ministry
In the man ; as I, each tone's unto the song !
'T is the appropriateness of sound to meaning
(Muscle with sinew interwove to bear
Pressure precise to the point the man's whole self
Wills) based best in departure from the gust
Of merely ear as ear, if masterfully
Whole — 't is the mastery's self-subordinance —
That yields voice to your music ; nowise mine !
Ah ! but my 'soul's original research,
Basis and background of interpreting' ? —
Insofar as bent, grasp and insight all,
To comprehension of your wonder-mood,
Perfect interpreter I well may seem !
But, grant, the rank sinew, overweening, thwart
The will of the hero ; insofar as thus
Self-thwarted, then no hero and no task ! —
Technic, essential — to effacing it !

EARLIER POEMS

But my tirade yet bears an inference
E'en beyond aught of Browning's Herakles !
(E'en beyond, friend, your inmost fear for me !)
I'm but a stop-gap ; Herakles, heroic
Not solely for a mastery-muscular
Of world, of death ; ah, more for the presaging,
A prophecy in him, of heroes new,
Of mastery more complex, conquering
To some task's end more worldly-intimate ;
Some self-expression in and through more means
Than muscles merely ; some philosopher,
Elucidator, artist like to you !
Where were the value to our modern world
(Nay, even to a post-heroic classic-age
Poetic as we are also musical !)
Of a latter Herakles ; save Herakles
Embrace modernity ? No muscle now
Finds ultimate tasks, regenerative aims
Work'd through thews, sinews merely ! — For this once
Let me show prophecy, show forth my spirit
In depths beyond mere prima-donnaship
(Even though deeply soul's interpreter) :

THE PRIMA DONNA

More worthy to be mated through your own !
Where find you music most ? In the vibrant voice
Ne'er so entrancing (nay, ne'er so intent
With sense-subordinance !); in voice of mine
At height of soul-interpreting ? Or then
When in the silent, sense-immediate
Brain the vast beauty bursts of issuant song
Unvoiced, yet self-articulant indeed ;
Made manuscript, maybe ; yielded to me
To lift and thrill and all-transfuse me through
With wonder and worship of imagined sound,
Perfectly plastic, truth-determined then ?
Miscomprehend me not ! Stand I and sing,
Add I to the music-marvel hints of charm,
I allow — not music's, not the mind's that sang
In vision, but visibly — women's ; at the best
Extraneous, adventitious ; at the worst
(Look to worse women !) art-detestable !
Ah ! were the sweat and reeking of the god
Good, best, themselves, or only by default
Of some great engine to envelop death,
Crush and o'erpower — man-directed still,

EARLIER POEMS

Conceived, invented, executed; man's
Multiple-marvel of effectiveness
For just the purpose, end and aim of the task ?
An 'instrumentation', you 'd aver ? Not quite ;
Save as a second stop-gap ; halfway stage
Through mere mechanic enginery toward strength
Of the logical positing, a forensic lore
Surpassing in the self-projection ; speech
Of poesy (ay, and of music) genius-made :
Fit to transcend even death, made death-through-life !
Instrumentation ? Insofar a step
From the extraneous, personal appeal
Of mere interpreter soul-ill-at-ease,
(Never, not once purely interpreting
The maker's meaning) — riddance, in some least
Degree, of mediator yet in kind
Originator and confuser so ! —
His Herakles were poet possibly ! —
Stands poesy now, intoned in pulpit, droned
At tableside, spouted above the pit
Poesy, as in the ante-music age
Of troubadour, of rhapsode chanting it —

THE PRIMA DONNA

Poesy ? Or poesy most, silently sent
From brain through brain by symbol'd syllablibg ? —
'The silent symbol still a mediator' ?
No ; no ! The syllablibg in the poet's soul
Speaks not save soul-included, comprehended
(In such sort as your reader may attain) —
Except for sight's absorption of the types —
Sans mediation's externality :
The meaning-in-the-sound — the poet-pure —
Taken up, reproduced, identified
In my mind-substantive, meaning-in-sound
Of mine ; suggested, straight interpreted
Even by the interpreter's obliteration —
The symbols nowise spoken, no, nor heard !
'Understood but by previous mediance
Call'd education' ? — Mediate previously,
Not now as contemporary with the song ;
But inborn, made immediate instantly !
I leave the elucidation to some seer
More versed in dialectic lore than me,
More capable of tracing point by point
Thought's infinite labyrinths — I dogmatize ;

EARLIER POEMS

State you the truth with just enough of truth's
Elaboration self-explanatory
To satisfy my soul if scarce convince you ;
I appeal in faith just to the faith in you,
Leave law to lawyers' pleading. 'T is your song
Unsung, made manuscript, so silently
Symbolized to self-syllabiling that springs
Direct, transcendent, satisfying, whole
In the soul of me, made one with yours by love ;
Love, through love's most elaborate symphonies
Identifiable in song !

I ' sing

To-night again ? Nay, 'cancel the contract, seek
Respite for nerves so set at odds with fact' ?
Ha ? Have I frighten'd you ; the pulse, the eye
Flush'd, fever'd in me ? I admit some glow
Of indignation godlike against ways
So pitiful, so unlike music's ! 'Mistress
Of song, indeed' ! — Ah ! but the end in view
(Realized through the soul's revolt from such applause!),
Mine aim that dignifies the technic, lends
More than interpreter's-efficiency